



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



TUESDAY — 26 OCT 2021

|  | International   | National  | Regional and Local   |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Events, Opportunities</b><br><a href="#">Go to articles</a> | <a href="#">10/26 Russia Covid deaths hit record high</a><br><a href="#">10/26 China urges faster testing in outbreak</a><br><a href="#">10/26 New Zealand expands vaccine mandate</a><br><a href="#">10/26 Myanmar junta rebuked by SE Asia</a><br><a href="#">10/26 Sudan capital locked down after unrest</a><br><a href="#">10/26 Protesters burn tires, block roads Sudan</a><br><a href="#">10/26 Concern: rise human bird flu cases China</a><br><a href="#">10/25 SKorea: 70% population vaccinated</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Papua New Guinea health system crisis</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Beijing Olympics tough Covid protocols</a><br><a href="#">10/25 China tries to completely eradicate virus</a><br><a href="#">10/25 China Delta outbreak ahead of Olympics</a><br><a href="#">10/25 China outbreaks: vaccinating young kids</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Russia reports record number daily cases</a><br><a href="#">10/25 France returns Benin treasures</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Hong Kong 2<sup>nd</sup> conviction new law</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Hong Kong clamps down on speech</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Sudan plagued w/unrest since 2019</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Sudan troops open fire on protesters</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Egypt leader ends state of emergency</a><br><a href="#">10/25 China, Russia warships encircle Japan</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Iran attack on US military base in Syria?</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Sudan military seizes power; arrests PM</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Turkey president steps back expel threat</a><br><a href="#">10/25 UN: half Afghans face hunger this winter</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Russia military drills near Afghan border</a><br><a href="#">10/25 UN: greenhouse gas levels hit new record</a><br><a href="#">10/24 German health officials raise concerns</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Migrant caravan south Mexico heads north</a> | <a href="#">10/25 Federal advisers split over boosters</a><br><a href="#">10/25 NYC police union sues over mandate</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Covid cases falling; trouble signs loom</a><br><a href="#">10/25 CDC director: relish Halloween outside</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Emergency rental relief ticked up in Sep</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Moderna: safe for children from 6 thru 11</a><br><a href="#">10/25 NYC inches toward Covid endemic phase</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Experts: worse of pandemic likely behind</a><br><a href="#">10/25 CDC: Delta didn't lead to worse outcomes</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Arizona pandemic outlook worries experts</a><br><a href="#">10/25 CDC extends cruise lines Covid rules to Jan</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Some exemptions from new US travel rules</a><br><a href="#">10/25 US international travel rules: tracing, testing</a><br><a href="#">10/25 America's gun violence problem</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Gas prices up \$1.22 over last year</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Prepare for propane sticker shock</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Record setting rain, flooding Calif.</a><br><a href="#">10/25 'Bomb cyclone' pummels California</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Extreme weather strikes coast-to-coast</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Lawsuit: 911 operator hung up; 2 dead</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Holiday season discounts short supply</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Texas braces for 'mother of all caravans'</a><br><a href="#">10/25 'Great Resignation' record number quitting</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Conservation group drops 'Audubon' name</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Pentagon spotlights the Black Sea</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Recall: Walmart room spray</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Unexpected pandemic consequence</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Covid vaccines soon for children 5 and up?</a><br><a href="#">10/24 New supply-chain hurdles at alternate ports</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Longer, more frequent outages power grid</a> | <a href="#">10/25 DOH: 716,315 cases, 8480 deaths</a><br><a href="#">10/25 State, Seattle vaccinated workers up</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Judge rejects bid to stop vaccine mandate</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Wakeup call over port congestion?</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Sec. of State picked to head DHS CISA</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Puget Sound storm recovery continues</a><br><a href="#">10/25 SPD not in compliance 2017 anti-bias law</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Fallen containers along Vancouver Island</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Asset forfeiture repossesses fraud claims</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Newspaper carrier sues over confrontation</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Gusty winds fell tree onto car; 2 killed</a><br><a href="#">10/23 King Co. vaccine, test verification begins</a> |
| <b>Cyber Awareness</b><br><a href="#">Go to articles</a>       | <a href="#">10/26 Cyberattack strikes Iran gas stations?</a><br><a href="#">10/26 Dutch media: crackdown darknet; arrests</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Countries ranked by online risks</a><br><a href="#">10/25 GCHQ: ransomware doubled in a year</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Hackers exploit billing software zero-day</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Subscription fraud targets Android users</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Beware: Squid Game app infects Androids</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Ransomware hits industrial goods, services</a><br><a href="#">10/24 New activity from Russian actor Nobelium</a>   | <a href="#">10/25 US tightens cyber export controls</a><br><a href="#">10/25 SolarWinds hackers continue attacks</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Big tech data centers spark worry: water</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Microsoft: Russia hacked 14 IT providers</a><br><a href="#">10/25 FBI internal guide: obtaining telecom data</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Russia renews cybersurveillance campaign</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Facebook gaps weaken terrorism screening</a><br><a href="#">10/25 News organizations: 'The Facebook Papers'</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Rare win cat-mouse game of ransomware</a>  |  |
| <b>Terror Conditions</b><br><a href="#">Go to articles</a>     | <a href="#">10/25 Houthi boat attacks pose Red Sea threat</a><br><a href="#">10/25 German court sentences IS woman 10yrs</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Potential terrorists ahead of COP26</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Uganda: Kampala bar bomb attack kills 1</a><br><a href="#">10/23 Taliban honor suicide bombers' 'sacrifices'</a><br><a href="#">10/23 Pakistan support Taliban fight against ISIS</a><br><a href="#">10/23 Uganda: 'serious blast' popular restaurant</a>  | <a href="#">10/25 How FBI nabbed German ISIS woman</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Private citizens to sponsor Afghan refugees</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Shadow war against Al Shabab</a><br><a href="#">10/23 Military: senior AQ leader killed in strike</a>  |  |
| <b>Suspicious, Unusual</b><br><a href="#">Go to articles</a>   | <a href="#">10/25 Taiwan military stand against China?</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Iran delaying talks for nuclear program?</a><br><a href="#">10/24 China remakes mosques more 'Chinese'</a>  | <a href="#">10/25 Lost hiker ignored calls: unknown number</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Border Patrol light punishments for agents</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Amazon's worst human resources problem</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Allegations: Jan 6 planners met Congress</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Fentanyl-induced ODs increasing</a><br><a href="#">10/24 How dangerous US film sets?</a>  | <a href="#">10/25 Spotted beluga whale likely from Arctic</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Sammamish named 'best small city in US'</a>   |
| <b>Crime, Criminals</b><br><a href="#">Go to articles</a>      | <a href="#">10/25 UK rise police disciplined for sex abuse</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Arrest: Colombia most-wanted drug lord</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Ecuador stares into abyss of drugs, crime</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Nigeria: gunmen kill 18 attending mosque</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Nigeria gunmen storm prison</a>  | <a href="#">10/25 Calif. unemployment fraud tops \$20B</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Charlottesville 'Unite the Right' civil trial</a><br><a href="#">10/25 'El Chapo' appeals conviction; seeks trial</a><br><a href="#">10/25 FBI: hate crimes against Asians rose 76%</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Chicago: 1970s serial killer victim identified</a><br><a href="#">10/25 'Criminal couponer' bilked stores of \$31.8M</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Air War College professor pleads guilty</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Mexico cartels exploit American teens</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Police chief 'shoot to incapacitate' policy</a>  | <a href="#">10/25 Triple murder suspect turns self in</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Auburn shooting: 1 killed, 1 in custody</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Seattle weekend: 3 unrelated stabbings</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Seattle PD investigates weekend shootings</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Seattle police bust Lego trafficking scheme</a><br><a href="#">10/25 Idaho mall shooting: 2 dead, 4 injured</a><br><a href="#">10/24 Portland police: 19 shootings over weekend</a>   |

## Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | 10/25 Wakeup call over port congestion?  |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/ship-that-lost-40-containers-near-strait-of-juan-de-fuca-a-potential-wake-up-call-over-port-congestion/281-0bc1fc48-fff1-4871-8181-3240bf3abd6c">https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/ship-that-lost-40-containers-near-strait-of-juan-de-fuca-a-potential-wake-up-call-over-port-congestion/281-0bc1fc48-fff1-4871-8181-3240bf3abd6c</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>SEATTLE — The U.S. Coast Guard in Seattle is opening up more places for large container ships to get out of severe weather, especially as ships continue to wait a week or more before they can be unloaded at the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, which together form the Northwest Seaport Alliance.</p> <p>“Offshore, the master is responsible for the safety of his vessel — we took some steps to try and increase the availability of places for the ships to get out of the storm,” said Laird Hail, director of the Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service and retired USCG captain.</p> <p>The Vessel Traffic Service based in Seattle watches vessel traffic in three primary sectors in the inland waters in Washington state and between Washington and British Columbia. In one of those sectors, running from the outer coast to Dungeness Spit inside the Strait of Juan de Fuca, vessels can at least get off the open ocean and slowly cruise back and forth in a race track formation west of Port Angeles.</p> <p>“We let their agents and the ships themselves know that we had additional anchorages we had opened up and that they would be able to do racetracks in the straight — but it’s up to the master whether to accept that option. And the master is responsible to maintain safety of his vessel,” Hail said.</p> <p>Protecting vessels is taking on a higher profile after the container ship Zim Kingston lost 40 containers while in bad weather on the open ocean, west of the entrance to the straight on Friday. The ship was inbound to the Port of Vancouver, Canada. Following its encounter with severe weather, it caught fire after hazardous chemicals in some containers ignited, according to the Canadian Coast Guard.</p> <p>“I’m just glad right now the vessel is whole and we are not also dealing with an oil spill,” said Fred Felleman, a maritime consultant, environmentalist and Port of Seattle commissioner.</p> <p>Felleman is concerned that too many ships are floating out in the open ocean in bad weather while waiting their turn to be unloaded as the global supply chain crisis affects West Coast ports in Washington and B.C. He is also concerned that rescue tugs may not be in position to help ships in distress. Though the Zim Kingston appears to have been hit with high seas and high winds while in route, Felleman considers it a bit of a wakeup call.</p> <p>“And I was just responding to the congressional delegation, saying that the last thing we need is our own L.A. pipeline as a consequence of port congestion,” Felleman said.</p> <p>At one point on Monday morning, the Coast Guard’s Vessel Traffic Circle counted 12 ships on the racetrack. It opened up four additional temporary anchorages at Port Madison courtesy of the Suquamish Tribe. Two of those spots could be taken by Tuesday.</p> <p>Director hail said there are only 16 anchorages available for these very large ships. Those anchorages include Elliott Bay off Seattle, near Manchester and Blake Island, and nestled in Holmes Harbor on the eastern side of Whidbey Island.</p> <p>The Port of Seattle under the Seaport Alliance has been offering up two additional docking spaces at Terminal 46, with no takers so far.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/26 Myanmar junta rebuked by SE Asia   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/southeast-asian-leaders-hold-summit-excluding-myanmar-coup-leader-2021-10-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/southeast-asian-leaders-hold-summit-excluding-myanmar-coup-leader-2021-10-26/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Oct 26 (Reuters) - Southeast Asian leaders sharply criticised Myanmar's junta as a regional summit opened on Tuesday without a representative from the country, following its top general's exclusion for ignoring a peace roadmap agreed six months ago.</p> <p>The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had said it would accept a non-political figure from Myanmar, but the junta on Monday rejected that, saying it would only agree to its leader or a minister attending.</p> <p>In an unprecedented snub to the leader of a member state, ASEAN had decided to <a href="#">sideline</a> junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, who led a Feb. 1 coup that spiralled into violence and nationwide chaos, for his failure to cease hostilities, allow humanitarian access and start dialogue with opponents, as agreed with ASEAN in April.</p> <p>The decision was a huge insult to Myanmar's military and a rare, bold step by a regional grouping known for its code of consensus, non-interference and engagement.</p> <p>"Today, ASEAN did not expel Myanmar from ASEAN's framework. Myanmar abandoned its right," said Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who will become the group's chairman next year.</p> <p>"Now we are in the situation of ASEAN minus one. It is not because of ASEAN, but because of Myanmar."</p> <p>Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said ASEAN had a slot ready for Myanmar, but it chose not to join.</p> <p>Indonesian President Joko Widodo in his remarks to leaders lamented Myanmar's "unwelcome attitude" towards ASEAN's diplomatic efforts, Retno said.</p> <p>"ASEAN's decision to invite a Myanmar representative on a non-political level was a heavy one, but it had to be done," she said.</p> <p>"The president reminded that it's important for us to honour the principles of non-interference. But on the other hand, we're obligated to uphold other principles ... like democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and a constitutional government."</p> <p>Myanmar's military, which ruled the country for 49 of the past 60 years, has <a href="#">objected strongly</a>, to ASEAN's uncharacteristically strict response, accusing it of departing from its norms and of allowing itself to be influenced by other countries, including the United States.</p> <p>Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a retired general considered the ASEAN leader closest to Myanmar's coup-makers, urged the country to implement a five-point roadmap it agreed with ASEAN. He said the issue was crucial for the bloc's reputation and a test of its resolve.</p> <p><b>CREDIBILITY AT STAKE</b></p> <p>"ASEAN's constructive role in addressing this situation is of paramount importance and our action on this matter shall have a bearing on ASEAN's credibility in the eyes of the international community," Prayuth said.</p> <p>ASEAN made the call days after its special envoy Erywan Yusof said the ruling State Administrative Council (SAC) denied him sufficient <a href="#">access</a>, <a href="#">including to ousted, democratically-elected leader</a> Aung San Suu Kyi, who is charged with multiple crimes.</p> |

Prayuth said he was hopeful the junta would trust ASEAN's intentions and that Erywan could visit Myanmar soon and make an "important first step in the process of confidence-building".

Myanmar security forces have killed more than 1,000 people and detained thousands more, many tortured and beaten, according to United Nations envoys, who say army offensives in civilian areas have caused massive displacement.

Myanmar has rejected that as biased and exaggerated by [unreliable sources](#) and blames "[terrorists](#)" allied with a shadow National Unity Government (NUG).

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met on Monday with representatives of the NUG, an alliance of pro-democracy groups, militias and ethnic minority armies formed after the coup.

ASEAN leaders were due also to collectively meet leaders of the United States, China and South Korea, while U.S. President Joe Biden will [attend](#) a joint session by video link.

Some analysts predict a lengthy standoff between Myanmar and ASEAN after a crisis they said has exposed the bloc's weaknesses and its need to take a different approach.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, director of the Institute of Security and International Studies at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, said ASEAN's best chance of success was to engage outside powers and all sides in Myanmar.

"The non-interference principle no longer holds because Myanmar's armed forces lowered the standards of acceptable governance so low that it has alienated and undermined ASEAN in the international community," Thitinan said.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/26 China urges faster testing in outbreak</b>   |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-urges-faster-covid-19-testing-amid-latest-outbreak-2021-10-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-urges-faster-covid-19-testing-amid-latest-outbreak-2021-10-26/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>BEIJING, Oct 26 (Reuters) - China is demanding faster and more accessible COVID-19 testing services in its latest effort to reinforce a zero-tolerance policy against the virus, even when cities have already scrambled to test millions in just a few days amid outbreaks.</p> <p>Frequent testing, and sometimes mass testing, is standard practice in China's containment of domestically transmitted outbreaks in the past year, but health authorities say testing services remain unsatisfactory in parts of China amid flare-ups.</p> <p>"Small clusters and sporadic infections have occurred in some areas, exposing problems such as the unreasonable locations of nucleic acid testing agencies, inconvenient services and delays in the returning of results," state media reported on Tuesday, citing the National Health Commission (NHC).</p> <p>China is facing a new wave of infections involving nearly 200 locally transmitted symptomatic cases in 12 provincial areas since Oct. 17. Many of the infected were from remote parts of northwest China without as much health resources as major cities.</p> <p>NHC said testing agencies should provide 24-hour services to the public and strive to have results within six hours for those who volunteer to be tested, according to state media reports.</p> <p>NHC said in September that cities with over 5 million people should have the capacity to test everyone within three days.</p> <p>While China is yet to approve self-testing kits for diagnosing COVID-19, swab tests that require professional labs to process samples are widely available.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>Local governments have recently cut prices of swab tests, with certain tests charging as little as 13 yuan (\$2.00) in the Chinese capital of Beijing.</p> <p>Some officials in a small administrative division of the Chinese region of Inner Mongolia were reprimanded on Tuesday for bad management at sample collection sites that led to chaotic crowds during a division-wide testing drive.</p> <p>Similar official admonishments were meted in the southern city of Zhangjiajie and in Yangzhou in the east during a cluster earlier this year.</p> <p>Since the new coronavirus was found in late 2019, mainland China has reported 96,840 confirmed cases with symptoms, including both local and imported infections, with fatalities totalling 4,636.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>HEADLINE</b> | <b>10/26 Concern: rise human bird flu cases China</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>   | <a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/rise-human-bird-flu-cases-china-shows-risk-fast-changing-variants-health-experts-2021-10-26/">https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/rise-human-bird-flu-cases-china-shows-risk-fast-changing-variants-health-experts-2021-10-26/</a>  |
| <b>GIST</b>     | <p>BEIJING, Oct 26 (Reuters) - A jump in the number of people in China infected with bird flu this year is raising concern among experts, who say a previously circulating strain appears to have changed and may be more infectious to people.</p> <p>China has reported 21 human infections with the H5N6 subtype of avian influenza in 2021 to the World Health Organization (WHO), compared with only five last year, it said.</p> <p>Though the numbers are much lower than the hundreds infected with H7N9 in 2017, the infections are serious, leaving many critically ill, and at least six dead.</p> <p>"The increase in human cases in China this year is of concern. It's a virus that causes high mortality," said Thijs Kuiken, professor of comparative pathology at Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam.</p> <p>Most of the cases had come into contact with poultry, and there are no confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission, said the WHO, which highlighted the rise in cases in a statement on Oct. 4.</p> <p>It said further investigation was "urgently" required to understand the risk and the increase in spill over to people.</p> <p>Since then, a 60-year-old woman in Hunan province was admitted to hospital in a critical condition with H5N6 influenza on Oct. 13, according to a Hong Kong government statement.</p> <p>While human H5N6 cases have been reported, no outbreaks of H5N6 have been reported in poultry in China since February 2020.</p> <p>China is the world's biggest poultry producer and top producer of ducks, which act as a reservoir for flu viruses.</p> <p>The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) could not be reached for comment on the rise in H5N6 human cases. However, a study published on its website last month said the "increasing genetic diversity and geographical distribution of H5N6 pose a serious threat to the poultry industry and human health".</p> <p>Avian influenza viruses constantly circulate in domestic and wild birds, but rarely infect people. However, the evolution of the viruses, which have increased as poultry populations grow, is a major concern because they could change into a virus that spreads easily between people and cause a pandemic.</p> |

The largest number of H5N6 infections have been in southwestern Sichuan province, though cases have also been reported in neighbouring Chongqing and Guangxi, as well as Guangdong, Anhui and Hunan provinces.

At least 10 were caused by viruses genetically very similar to the H5N8 virus that ravaged poultry farms across Europe last winter and also killed wild birds in China. That suggests the latest H5N6 infections in China may be a new variant.

"It could be that this variant is a little more infectious (to people)...or there could be more of this virus in poultry at the moment and that's why more people are getting infected," said Kuiken.

Four of the Sichuan cases raised poultry at home and had been in contact with dead birds, said a September report by China's CDC. Another had bought a duck from a live poultry market a week before developing symptoms.

China vaccinates poultry against avian influenza but the vaccine used last year may only partially protect against emerging viruses, preventing large outbreaks but allowing the virus to keep circulating, said Filip Claes, Regional Laboratory Coordinator at the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases at the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs did not respond to a request for comment.

Backyard farms in China are common and many people still prefer to buy live chickens at markets.

Guilin city in Guangxi region, which had two human cases in August, said last month it had suspended trading of live poultry in 13 urban markets and would abolish the trade within a year.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/26 Sudan capital locked down after unrest</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/telecommunications-interrupted-sudan-after-coup-2021-10-26/">https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/telecommunications-interrupted-sudan-after-coup-2021-10-26/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>KHARTOUM, Oct 26 (Reuters) - Roads were blocked, shops were shut, phones were down and mosque loudspeakers blared calls for a general strike in Sudan on Tuesday, a day after the army seized power in a coup.</p> <p>At least seven people were killed in unrest triggered by the military takeover, which brought a halt to Sudan's transition to democracy two years after a popular uprising ended decades of authoritarian rule.</p> <p>Plumes of smoke rose over Khartoum from tyres set ablaze by protesters. Life came to a halt in the capital and in its twin city Omdurman across the Nile, with roads blocked either by soldiers or by protester barricades.</p> <p>The night appeared to have passed comparatively quietly after Monday's unrest, when protesters took to the streets after soldiers arrested Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and other civilians in the cabinet. A health ministry official said seven people had been killed in clashes between protesters and the security forces.</p> <p>On Monday, takeover leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan dissolved the military-civilian Sovereign Council set up to guide Sudan to democracy following the overthrow of long-ruling autocrat Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.</p> <p>Burhan announced a state of emergency, saying the armed forces needed to protect safety and security. He promised to hold elections in July 2023 and hand over to an elected civilian government then. On Tuesday he dissolved committees that govern trade unions, Arabic news channels reported.</p> |



The Sudan information ministry, still loyal to Hamdok, has called the takeover a crime and said Hamdok is still the legitimate leader.

Hamdok and his missing cabinet members were still being held in an unknown location, the foreign minister of the ousted government said in a message posted on the information ministry's Facebook page on Tuesday.

Main roads and bridges between Khartoum and Omdurman were closed to vehicles by the military. Banks and cash machines were shut, and mobile phone apps widely used for money transfers could not be accessed.

#### 'PAYING THE PRICE'

Some bakeries were open in Omdurman but people were queuing for several hours.

"We are paying the price for this crisis," a man in his 50s looking for medicine at one of the pharmacies where stocks have been running low said angrily. "We can't work, we can't find bread, there are no services, no money."

In the western city of El Geneina, resident Adam Haroun said there was complete civil disobedience, with schools, stores and gas stations closed.

Large street protests took place in the cities of Atbara, Dongola, Elobeid and Port Sudan, images on social media showed.

People chanted "Don't give your back to the army, the army won't protect you."

The Sudanese Professionals Association, an activist coalition that played a major role in the uprising that toppled Bashir, has called for a strike.

Western governments have condemned the coup, called for the release of the detained civilian leaders and threatened to cut off aid, which Sudan needs to recover from an economic crisis.

The United States has said it was immediately pausing delivery of \$700 million in emergency support.

Sudan has been ruled for most of its post-colonial history by military leaders who seized power in coups. It had become a pariah to the West and was on a U.S. terrorism blacklist under Bashir, who hosted Osama bin Laden in the 1990s and is wanted by the International Criminal Court in the Hague for war crimes.

Since Bashir was toppled, the military shared power uneasily with civilians under a transition meant to lead to elections in 2023. The country had been on edge since last month when a failed coup plot, blamed on Bashir supporters, unleashed recriminations between the military and civilians.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/26 Russia Covid deaths hit record high   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-lifestyle-russia-pandemics-4ab47cad778beb8d4085ed71ccb6a7da">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-lifestyle-russia-pandemics-4ab47cad778beb8d4085ed71ccb6a7da</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>MOSCOW (AP) — The daily number of COVID-19 deaths in Russia hit another high Tuesday amid a surge in infections that forced the Kremlin to order most Russians to stay off work starting this week.</p> <p>The national coronavirus task force reported 1,106 deaths in 24 hours, the most since the start of the pandemic. The number brought the country's pandemic death toll to 232,775, Europe's biggest by far.</p> <p>Russia registered 36,446 new daily coronavirus cases, slightly fewer compared to the past few days.</p> |

In a move intended to stem the spread of the virus, Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered a nonworking period between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7, when the country will observe an extended holiday.

During that time, most state organizations and private businesses are to suspend operations, and most stores will close along with kindergartens, schools, gyms and most entertainment venues. Restaurants and cafes will only be open for takeout or delivery orders. Food stores, pharmacies and businesses operating key infrastructure can stay open.

Access to museums, theaters, concert halls and other venues will be limited to people holding digital codes on their smartphones to prove they have been vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19, a practice that will remain in place after Nov. 7.

Putin has told local officials to order unvaccinated people older than 60 to stay home and to close nightclubs and other entertainment venues.

Authorities also have moved to strengthen the enforcement of mask mandates on public transportation and in indoor venues, which have been loosely observed.

The Russian leader encouraged the worst-affected regions to start the off-work time earlier and possibly extend it beyond Nov. 7. Six of Russia's 85 regions began the idle period on Monday, and more joined them Tuesday. Moscow is set to suspend work for most people Thursday.

Russian authorities expect the time off to help limit the spread of contagion by keeping people out of offices and off public transportation.

However, the sales of airline tickets and hotel bookings at Russian Black Sea resorts surged at the news of the extended holiday, forcing authorities in the south to shut entertainment venues and limit access to restaurants and bars to customers with the digital health codes. Tour companies also reported a surge in demand for package vacations for Egyptian resorts.

The government has blamed the quick spread of the virus and soaring deaths on low vaccination rates. About 49 million Russians — about a third of the country's nearly 146 million people — are fully vaccinated.

Russia was the first country in the world to authorize a coronavirus vaccine, launching Sputnik V in August 2020. It has abundant supplies of the vaccine, but citizens have been slow to get shots, a trend blamed in part on conflicting signals from authorities.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/26 Protesters burn tires, block roads Sudan</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-africa-sudan-middle-east-united-nations-537e14871a64dbc634430c60b7c662b5">https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-africa-sudan-middle-east-united-nations-537e14871a64dbc634430c60b7c662b5</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>CAIRO (AP) — Pro-democracy protesters blocked roads in Sudan's capital with makeshift barricades and burning tires Tuesday, a day after the military seized power in a swift coup widely denounced by the international community.</p> <p>The takeover came after weeks of mounting tensions between military and civilian leaders over the course and the pace of Sudan's transition to democracy. It threatened to derail that process, which has progressed in fits and starts since the overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in a popular uprising two years ago.</p> <p>The United Nations Security Council was to discuss the situation in a closed-door meeting later in the day.</p> <p>Western governments and the U.N. condemned the coup and called for the release of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and other senior officials, who were arrested Monday. U.S. President Joe Biden's</p> |



administration announced the suspension of \$700 million in emergency assistance to Sudan, a nation in Africa linked by language and culture to the Arab world.

Mariam al-Mahdi, the foreign minister in the government that the military dissolved, was defiant Tuesday, declaring that she and other members of Hamdok's administration remained the legitimate authority in Sudan.

"We are still in our positions. We reject such coup and such unconstitutional measures," she told The Associated Press over the phone from her home in Khartoum. "We will continue our peaceful disobedience and resistance."

Hours after the military arrested Hamdok, Sudanese flooded the streets of the capital, Khartoum, and other cities in protest. At least four people were killed and over 80 wounded when security forces opened fire on protesters, according to the Sudan Doctors' Committee.

The country and the world are now braced to see if more violence will unfold in the nation, which saw a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2019. Some protesters remained in the streets of Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman on Tuesday morning, with many roads blocked. A bigger test of how the military will respond to the resistance could come Saturday when protesters plan a mass march to demand a return to civilian rule.

Troops from the military and the feared Rapid Support Forces patrolled Khartoum neighborhoods overnight, chasing protesters. The international group Human Rights Watch said forces used live ammunition against demonstrators.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for an immediate halt to violence against protesters and for the restoration of internet services. He said the U.S. was coordinating with partners to "chart a common diplomatic approach to address these actions and to prevent them from leading to further instability in Sudan and the region."

On Monday, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the top military official in Sudan, dissolved the Hamdok government and the Sovereign Council, a joint military and civilian body created soon after al-Bashir's ouster to run the country. He now heads a military council that he said would rule Sudan until elections in July 2023.

Burhan blamed quarrels and divisions among political factions for the military takeover. However, the coup comes less than a month before Burhan was supposed to hand the leadership of the Sovereign Council to a civilian, a step that would have decreased the military's hold on power. In recent weeks, he repeatedly indicated he might not go through with that.

The general said he is serious about holding elections on schedule. But much could happen in the coming 19 months, and it is not clear if the military will be willing to release the grip it has had for decades.

Hamdok and others in the transitional government are still being held at a military camp outside Khartoum. Al-Mahdi spoke to the wife of one of those detained, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Khalid Omar, and said he was humiliated and mistreated during his arrest.

"They (military forces) took Khalid barefoot, wearing only his nightclothes," she said.

The Sudanese Professionals' Association, a group of unions which was behind the uprising against al-Bashir, urged people to go on strike and engage in civil disobedience. Separately, the Sudan Popular Liberation Movement-North, the country's main rebel group, denounced the coup and called for people to take to the streets.

[Return to Top](#)

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| SOURCE | <a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10129323/Texas-troopers-Texas-Rangers-brace-thousands-migrants-days.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10129323/Texas-troopers-Texas-Rangers-brace-thousands-migrants-days.html</a>   |
| GIST   | <p>A unit of 1,000 state police officers and Texas Rangers assigned to monitor areas along the Lone Star State's 1,241 miles of border with Mexico is readying to guard against the next surge of migrants looking to defy President Joe Biden's administration.</p> <p>A month has passed since Texas state law enforcement agents played a role in preventing some 15,000 migrants - mostly Haitians - from crossing the United States-Mexico border.</p> <p>The state troopers and Rangers would be expected to do the same in the coming days, but with a smaller caravan of migrants predominantly led by Central Americans that is marching through southern Mexico toward the United States.</p> <p>Organizers had initially said that the group, called 'Madre Caravana' or 'Mother Caravan,' would be formed by tens of thousands of migrants, according to BorderReport.com.</p> <p>But now, about 3,000 migrants, including some 250 children, stopped along a highway in Huehuetán, a city in the southern state of Chiapas, on Monday, as the weather topped 89 degrees but really felt like 99 due to the humidity.</p> <p>'The Texas Department of Public Safety [DPS] is committed to securing our southern border under the direction of Texas Governor Greg Abbott and has deployed around one-thousand Troopers, Special Agents and Texas Rangers as part of Operation Lone Star (OLS),' a spokesperson told DailyMail.com on Monday.</p> <p>'While the department does not discuss operational specifics, we continue to monitor the situation as it unfolds in order to make real-time decisions and will adjust operations as necessary.'</p> <p>A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) spokesperson told DailyMail.com that the agency 'plans for all possible scenarios based off information on the operations of smugglers or movements of migrants.</p> <p>'Our posture and response are based on comprehensive analysis, and not on any single report. 'CBP stands ready to address any potential increase in migrant encounters as we work to ensure safety and security of our borders, while managing a fair and orderly immigration system.'</p> <p>The caravan initially drew its members by distributing a QR code via text message October 15.</p> <p>The migrants, who would seek asylum under the Biden administration of, started their journey by foot Saturday when they took off from the town of Tapachula across from Guatemala's border.</p> <p>Many clashed with hundreds of law enforcement officers in riot gear who were unsuccessful in attempting to block their path.</p> <p>A Salvadoran migrant interviewed by Fox News defied the United States' stance on securing its borders from unlawful migration and told the network, 'Tell Biden we are coming.'</p> <p>The group's plan is to reach Mexico City and demand that the Institute of National Migration speed up the process in providing the legal document that is necessary for the migrants to move freely in the country.</p> <p>Mexican television network Foro TV said the group also consists of South American, Haitian and African migrants who have spent the last eight months stuck in Chiapas and waiting for the Mexican government to approve their travel documents.</p> <p>At least 147,000 undocumented migrants were registered in southern Mexico between January and August of this year, triple the amount that was reported during the same period in 2020.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>The Institute of National Migration declined to comment when it was contacted by DailyMail.com on Monday.</p> <p>Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard slammed smugglers and organizers during a press conference Monday, accusing them of misleading migrants into believing the United States would simply allow them to freely cross the border.</p> <p>'We will act with caution, with care for the law and human rights,' Ebrard said.</p> <p>'But we do want to say that they are deceiving people because it is not true that they are going to let them pass to the United States.'</p> <p>Some migrants who attempted to leave Tapachula in September to head north were subject to brutal treatment by Mexican officials, and the Institute of National Migration condemned incidents of violence captured on video at the time.</p> <p>U.S. Border Patrol reported 1,734,686 encounters with migrants for unlawfully crossing the United States-Mexico border during fiscal year 2021, according to the latest CBP monthly southwestern border report released last Friday.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Recall: Walmart room spray</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/deadly-bacteria-room-spray-walmart-recall/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/deadly-bacteria-room-spray-walmart-recall/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Walmart is recalling room spray sold nationwide due to the possible presence of what federal regulators called a "rare and dangerous" bacteria that is linked to two deaths, including a child.</p> <p>The retailer sold about 3,900 bottles of Better Homes and Gardens-branded-Essential Oil Infused Aromatherapy Room Spray with Gemstones in six different scents, according to a <a href="#">recall</a> notice posted Friday by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tested a sample of the product this week and found it contained the bacteria Burkholderia pseudomallei, which causes melioidosis, a rare but serious disease with about a dozen cases reportedly annually in the U.S.</p> <p>The recall comes two months after the CDC warned the bacterial disease had caused two <a href="#">deaths</a> and urged doctors to be on the lookout for more cases.</p> <p>Consumers are urged not to use — or even open — the recalled spray. Instead, they are advised to wear gloves and double bag the bottles in zip-top clear resealable bags, which should be placed in a small cardboard box and returned to a Walmart store for a refund. The company is also offering a \$20 Walmart gift card for customers who return the product.</p> <p>Any surfaces or fabrics that may have been sprayed with the product would be wiped down or washed. The five-ounce glass bottles of room spray retailed for about \$4 each, and were sold in in about 55 stores and online from February through October.</p> <p>Walmart has stopped selling the product, which was made in India and sold with a pump spray nozzle in the following scents and product numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84140411420 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Lavender &amp; Chamomile</li> <li>• 84140411421 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Lemon and Mandarin</li> <li>• 84140411422 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Lavender</li> <li>• 84140411423 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Peppermint</li> <li>• 84140411424 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Lime &amp; Eucalyptus</li> <li>• 84140411425 Better Homes and Gardens (BHG) Gem Room Spray Sandalwood and Vanilla</li> </ul> |

Most cases of [melioidosis](#) occur in people who live in or have traveled to areas where the bacteria naturally occurs, such as parts of Asia and Australia, as well as occasionally in Brazil, Mexico and Puerto Rico. It causes a wide range of symptoms that can be confused with other common illnesses, like flu or a cold, according to the CDC.

The bacteria detected in the bottles is the same type that sickened four people earlier this year, with one of the recalled sprays found October 6 in the home of a Georgia resident stricken with melioidosis in late July, according to the agency. The CDC is conducting tests to determine if the genetic fingerprint of the bacteria in the bottle matches those found in three other patients, the agency said Friday in a [statement](#).

"Our hearts go out to the families that have been impacted by this situation," Dr. Inger Damon, director of CDC's division of High-Consequence Pathogens and Pathology, which manages melioidosis, said in a statement. "Our scientists have continued to work tirelessly to try to find the potential source for the melioidosis infections in these patients. We hope this work can help protect other people who may have used this spray."

Walmart issued a separate statement late Friday.

"We are deeply concerned that there may be a connection between this product and this rare bacteria. Our sympathies and concerns are with the four families that have been impacted. We took immediate action after federal agencies alerted us Wednesday of concerns with an aromatherapy room spray manufactured by Flora Classique Inc. and sold under the Better Homes & Gardens brand. We pulled the product from the shelves of about 55 stores where it was part of a pilot program and put a register block in place at our stores and online to prevent any further sales."

The company also reiterated the importance of handling the products safely and returning to Walmart. Based in Wildomar, California, Flora Classique is affiliated with Ramesh Flowers Pvt. in Tuticorin, India, one of that nation's largest manufacturers and exporters of home fragrance and decor products, according to information on Flora Classique's [website](#). Flora Classique mostly distributes its products at mass retailers and discount stores throughout the U.S., operating warehouses in Wildomar and Memphis, Tennessee.

The company is a part of the [Gala Group](#), a German manufacturer of candles, home scents and home decor that employs about 5,000 and operates production sites in Europe, North America and India.

The U.S. Department of Defense in June [awarded](#) a \$3 million contract to the University of Hawaii at Manoa's School of Life Sciences to develop a vaccine for melioidosis, which experts say can be a potential bioterrorism threat.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Russia military drills near Afghan border</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-military-drills-near-afghan-border-deliver-warning-to-extremists-11635188626">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-military-drills-near-afghan-border-deliver-warning-to-extremists-11635188626</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>HARB-MAIDON RANGE, Tajikistan—Russia held a series of joint military exercises with its Central Asian neighbors near the border with Afghanistan last week, a reflection of the concern in Moscow that ethnic tension or terrorism could spill over from the country as extremists such as <a href="#">Islamic State challenge the Taliban's rule</a> there.</p> <p>The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO, which also includes Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, conducted a weeklong series of exercises that ended Saturday on the Harb-Maidon training range, less than 20 miles north of Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.</p> <p>Involving more than 4,000 troops using artillery, tanks and assault aircraft, the drills sought to signal that any infiltration from Afghan territory into Tajikistan would be met by force, Russian military officials said.</p> |

[Since the Taliban took power in August](#), Russia has expressed concern over activities by terrorist organizations in Afghanistan that could enter former Soviet Central Asian states and cause instability across Moscow's backyard. Moreover, some of Afghanistan's neighbors worry that fighters from Afghanistan could fan ethnic tensions in their own countries.

Since [the exit of U.S. forces](#) in August, relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which have long been strained, have mounted on the almost 900-mile border the two countries share, as Tajik officials warn that ethnic-Tajik militants who fought alongside the Taliban might try to infiltrate their country. In recent weeks, both sides have deployed armed forces to their common border, according to Russia's foreign ministry.

"In addition to training, military purposes, with these exercises we demonstrated to the whole world, including our ill-wishers, that this land is reliably protected [and] that any intrusion, any encroachment, will be suppressed," Lt. Gen. Stanislav Zas, secretary-general of the CSTO told reporters Saturday at the range. "Tajikistan will never be left alone with its misfortune."

Boris Dolgov, a senior research fellow at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies, warned that groups in Tajikistan that sympathize with the Taliban and Islamist ideals could act against the government.

"For Russia, of course, this is a threat, since the border between Afghanistan and Russia is insufficiently equipped and insufficiently guarded," Mr. Dolgov said. "In the event of any actions on the part of radical Islamist groups from Afghanistan into the territory of Tajikistan, and if the sleeping cells of the Islamist forces in Tajikistan contribute to this Islamist expansion, this is a clear threat for both Tajikistan and Russia."

During the exercises at Harb-Maidon, aerial reconnaissance by Russian and Tajik military aircraft practiced spotting columns of militants crossing the border of Afghanistan into Tajikistan. Special forces from both countries were deployed in the area by Mi-8 helicopters; Russian Su-25 attack aircraft launched strikes with unguided missiles at the advancing foes.

Since the Taliban takeover, Moscow has reinforced its sprawling military base in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe, which is Russia's largest military facility outside its borders and includes armored, artillery and reconnaissance units, air-defense forces, radiation, chemical and biological protection, and signal-communications troops.

Col. Yevgeny Okhrimenko, chief of staff of the base, said Sunday that in the past two months new weapons had arrived, including modernized infantry fighting vehicles and a Verba portable antiaircraft missile system. The base was also equipped with a Kornet antitank guided-missile system, he said.

On Sunday, troops staged a mock attempted infiltration of the base by hostile forces.

"Almost all of the personnel at the military base went through an operation in Syria," Col. Okhrimenko said. "We are ready to repel any threats."

While relations have rapidly deteriorated between Dushanbe and Kabul, the Russian government appears to increasingly favor full engagement with the Taliban, analysts said.

Last week, [Russia hosted the Taliban for international talks in Moscow](#) and called for cooperating with the country regardless of whether the international community recognizes the Taliban as the new Afghan government. A day later, Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) said Moscow was moving toward removing the Taliban from its list of extremist organizations, which the movement has been on for almost two decades.

On Monday, Zamir Kabulov, Russia's presidential envoy for Afghanistan, told reporters that Moscow wasn't aware of any plans by the Taliban to undertake hostile actions against Central Asian countries.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Lt. Gen. Zas, the CSTO commander, stressed that the recent military exercises weren't intended to signal aggression toward Kabul, but instead to ensure the "destruction of terrorist groups, illegal armed formations, which really exist" and pose a regional threat.</p> <p>"During these exercises we didn't practice war with Afghanistan," the senior military officer said. "On the contrary, the CSTO states are in favor of a peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan, free from war, terrorism and drugs."</p> <p>The smuggling of drugs across Afghanistan's border into Central Asia remains a major concern in the cash-strapped nation. Afghanistan accounts for more than 80% of global opium and heroin supplies, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.</p> <p>On Monday, Mr. Kabulov said Russia, which has urged the international community to mobilize efforts to provide urgent economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, was preparing to deliver humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in the coming days.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 New supply-chain hurdles at alternate ports</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/shippers-find-new-supply-chain-hurdles-at-alternate-ports-11635076801?mod=hp_minor_pos13">https://www.wsj.com/articles/shippers-find-new-supply-chain-hurdles-at-alternate-ports-11635076801?mod=hp_minor_pos13</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>When Flexport Inc. learned in the past month that an ocean carrier planned to shift cargo from the congested operations at the Port of Los Angeles to little Port Hueneme some 80 miles up the California coast, the freight forwarder found that trucking companies weren't ready to go along with the changing direction of the imports.</p> <p>"We talked to trucking carriers throughout the market in L.A. and Oakland and the sense was that they could not support the volume if it moved through Port Hueneme," said Jason Parker, the company's head of trucking.</p> <p>The San Francisco-based company shifted gears, pulling 200 containers from the ocean booking and instead routing many of them to Los Angeles despite a likely longer wait there to offload goods.</p> <p>"The two-week delay coming to Los Angeles versus the Hueneme routing was going to cause less headache for the customers," Mr. Parker said.</p> <p>The choice highlighted how shippers looking to avoid bottlenecks at major gateways by diverting goods through alternate ports face tough tradeoffs and new questions. How do they get furniture, clothing, toys and other items to stores and warehouses that are far from their established supply lines and have modest transport connections to other parts of the country?</p> <p>Smaller ports don't have dozens of ships stacked up off the coast waiting for berth space, as do Los Angeles and the neighboring Port of Long Beach, Calif. The sites have drawn long looks from shippers and freight forwarders, and even <a href="#">brought them chartered ships</a> from the growing number of <a href="#">retailers who are hiring vessels</a> to get around the backups to get goods in stores for the holidays.</p> <p>But most don't have enough dock workers to unload cargo or a steady supply of truckers or warehouse space to handle a big jump in cargo volumes, said Anthony Hatch, a rail transportation analyst and principal at ABH Consulting.</p> <p>"They make for nice stories," Mr. Hatch said. "But they are all on the margin."</p> <p>The efforts have sent cargo to established West Coast gateways like the ports of Seattle and Oakland, Calif., and to destinations still farther from traditional container shipping trade lanes. The Port of Portland, Ore., which <a href="#">lost regularly scheduled</a> container service in 2016, has recovered some operations and gained</p> |



some charters this year. The Port of Hueneme, known mostly as an import gateway for Del Monte bananas, expects its first chartered container ship to arrive in November.

Ports on the East Coast like Baltimore and Port Tampa Bay, Fla., also are trumpeting congestion-free operations in an effort to lure container lines and their shipping customers.

The capacity at those ports pales against the operations at Los Angeles and Long Beach. That complex handled just over 6 million loaded inbound containers in the first seven months of the year, nearly 40% of all container imports that landed at U.S. ports over that time, according to Beacon Economics, a research firm based in Los Angeles.

The scale of the import business there has [created a sprawling network](#) of trucking, rail and warehousing operations aimed at delivering imports to U.S. markets, both for the big consumer base in Southern California or distribution centers and freight hubs reaching out to Chicago and other inland sites.

The ports' high profile as an import gateway has grown as retailers have rushed to restock inventories that were depleted earlier in the pandemic, helping push some 1.1 million more containers through Los Angeles and Long Beach during the first seven months of this year than they handled over the same period in 2019.

The flood of imports has led to a [logjam of vessels](#) waiting offshore for berth space that has persisted over the past year. The bottleneck has hovered at between 60 and 70 vessels this fall and reached a record 79 container ships on Thursday, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California.

Sailing to alternative ports can add weeks to the time it takes to get goods from Asia to the U.S., however, and can pile on new costs and complications.

Rachel Rowell, a spokeswoman for freight middleman C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., said shifting the flow of goods requires container availability, space on a vessel, truck capacity and equipment including the chassis that attaches to trucks to allow them to carry containers. All of those may be in short supply.

"Shifting entire chains is a more challenging ordeal than a cab shifting which street it takes, which is why shifting ports is not often a preferred option and why it is difficult to do last-minute," she said.

Freight forwarder Seko Logistics has chartered ships to Portland, Ore., and Jacksonville, Fla., for frustrated importers. Each time, the firm must lease sea containers for the voyage. It also has leased extra space in Portland to manage the boxes and spent weeks finding local trucking companies capable of moving the goods to distribution hubs in Ohio and California.

The efforts have brought shipping costs to as high as \$20,000 per box, not far from the high rates in today's spot container shipping markets.

Transferring cargo from containers to trucks isn't ideal for importers like Jim Jones, senior manager of international logistics at RST Brands, a Salt Lake City-based furniture seller, that used the service. "The more times the product is touched the more times you have an opportunity for damage and for things to get lost," he said.

Even so, Mr. Jones said that if supply-chain congestion continues to frustrate his attempts to import furniture he would use the service again.

ITS Logistics has moved truckers from Jacksonville, Fla., to Charleston, S.C., to serve shippers who wanted to avoid the Port of Savannah, Ga., after ships started backing up offshore in August and September. It has considered moving other drivers to Houston but doesn't take such steps lightly.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | “For the drivers and for us it is taxing,” said Paul Brashier, vice president of drayage and intermodal at ITS Logistics, based in Reno, Nev. “When you reposition folks hundreds of miles away and they’re used to running back and forth locally and they’re home every night that’s a definite challenge.” |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 Asset forfeiture repossesses fraud claims</b>  |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3202978/state-recovers-495000-in-stolen-unemployment-benefits-with-innovative-legal-strategy/">https://mynorthwest.com/3202978/state-recovers-495000-in-stolen-unemployment-benefits-with-innovative-legal-strategy/</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>An estimated \$640 million in fraudulent unemployment claims were withdrawn from the Washington Employment Security Department over the course of the pandemic. The Washington Attorney General’s office announced Monday that it has succeeded in repossessing some of that money with an innovative legal strategy.</p> <p><a href="#">Asset forfeiture</a> dates back to the colonial era when port authorities wielded the law to seize cargo that had evaded customs. Today, it is exercised in Washington state to the tune of an estimated \$11 million in seizures a year, usually within the context of drug crime. It typically enables police to obtain certain assets that are alleged to have been connected with illegal activity.</p> <p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson has applied that strategy for the first time to repossess \$495,000 in fraudulent unemployment claims.</p> <p>On Oct. 25, King County Superior Court Judge Johanna Bender granted the attorney general’s first motion for forfeiture, ordering TD Bank to transfer back \$495,000 from 120 accounts where the stolen funds had been deposited.</p> <p>“My legal team is using every tool in our toolbox to recover stolen dollars,” Ferguson wrote in a press release. “Stay tuned because we’re not done.”</p> <p>The process involved the subpoena of more than 35 banks across the state to identify accounts that had received unemployment benefits from multiple states, people, or had inconsistent personal identification.</p> <p>As of June 18, 2021, ESD estimated it paid out approximately 96,000 known or probable fraudulent claims totaling over \$640 million. Washington state has recovered a portion of the fraudulently paid funds. However, as of June 18, 2021, an estimated \$315 million in stolen funds had yet to be recovered.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Pentagon spotlights the Black Sea</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-russia-black-sea/2021/10/25/3f5d458e-3562-11ec-9bc4-86107e7b0ab1_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-russia-black-sea/2021/10/25/3f5d458e-3562-11ec-9bc4-86107e7b0ab1_story.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin traveled throughout the Black Sea region last week to promote the partnerships needed to mount a credible defense against Russia along the most volatile territorial frontier between Moscow and the West. But despite his show of support, experts say the Biden administration so far has struggled to articulate how it intends to turn the United States’ alliances into a successful plan for repelling Russian aggression, which is on the rise.</p> <p>“What is our strategy? Why should we care about the Black Sea region? That’s missing,” said retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who commanded all U.S. Army forces in Europe for a time during the Obama and Trump administrations and is now with the Center for European Policy Analysis. The limited military hardware that’s been supplied to certain countries in the region, he added, stem from “policy decisions that are not rooted in a sustainable, long-term strategy.”</p> <p>For more than a decade, the Black Sea region has been a battleground where pro-Western and pro-Russian forces have clashed — and Moscow has often emerged with the upper hand. In 2008, war between a democratizing Georgia and Russia ended with Moscow helping two Georgian territories</p> |

break away from the government in Tbilisi. In 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine after the country ousted a pro-Kremlin government and helped separatists in its eastern provinces mount an ongoing war with Kyiv.

More recently, Russia has made significant investments in its navy's Black Sea Fleet — and in the last several months, it has used those assets to menace Western forces during joint exercises and as ships move through the region.

Against that backdrop, U.S. allies have clamored for more troops and more weapons from the United States and NATO, to help them fortify their front line against Russian aggression. But there was noticeably little of that on offer as Austin made his tour through Georgia, Ukraine, Romania and ultimately to NATO headquarters in Brussels, even as he called forcefully on Russia “to end its destabilizing activities in the Black Sea ... and to halt its persistent cyberattacks and other malign activities” against the United States and its partners.

“They have this great rhetoric ... but the details aren't there,” said Jim Townsend, who worked on NATO and European policy at the Pentagon during the Obama administration and now is with the Center for a New American Security. “It's almost like there's a line that we're not going to cross when it comes to the Black Sea.”

About 1,000 U.S. troops are stationed in NATO member Romania on a rotational basis, a number that is not expected to change dramatically or become a permanent presence, according to senior defense officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview Austin's visit there.

The Biden administration has stepped up security assistance to NATO hopefuls Ukraine and Georgia, meanwhile, by providing the countries with patrol boats, approving sales and transfers of Javelin missiles, and expanding bilateral and multilateral military exercises.

Ukraine, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria are also part of a U.S.-sponsored maritime program, through which they have been able to tap other defense resources over the years.

But a new pact that Austin signed with his Georgian counterpart last week to formalize a training partnership was largely an extension of an existing program. The same goes for an announcement in Brussels that NATO would defend itself against a two-front attack from Russia by investing in missile defense and fifth-generation jets — programs that already exist.

“Where's the beef in some of the announcements that were made in Georgia, in Kyiv, in Bucharest and at NATO?” asked Ian Brzezinski, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center who worked on NATO and Europe policy at the Defense Department during President George W. Bush's administration. He cited “the ambiguity of the alliance's relationship” with the Black Sea countries — particularly those which are not yet NATO members — as one of the reasons the region continues to be “a uniquely intense zone of competition” with Russia.

There is palpable concern within NATO about stoking conflict with Russia. While the alliance has pledged to ready itself for possible multi-front attacks from Moscow, there is a reluctance in some corners to stir the pot — especially when it comes to Ukraine's and Georgia's NATO, which are actively embroiled in territorial disputes involving Russia. France and Germany, in particular, have expressed skepticism about their inclusion, even as the two countries committed troops to the Afghanistan war effort, engaged in domestic reform efforts and took steps to make their defense systems more interoperable with the alliance.

Last week, in the midst of Austin's visit to NATO, Russian President Vladimir Putin told reporters that Ukraine's military development “poses a threat to Russia,” and that its accession to the alliance would be a red line. Those comments followed Austin's declaration in Kyiv that “no third country has a veto over NATO's membership decisions.” He made similarly unambiguous remarks while in Tbilisi, condemning “Russia's ongoing occupation of Georgia.”

That Austin's visit captured the attention of Russia's president is, in itself, significant. Before last week, no U.S. defense secretary had set foot in Romania or Georgia since 2014, and none had visited Ukraine since 2017.

But the factors that govern Black Sea security are not a simple balancing act between east and west. Delicate regional alliances and balances of power complicate any increased U.S. or NATO intervention as well as efforts to promote broader cooperation between the countries that share coastline, analysts and senior defense officials note.

For example, while Romania and Bulgaria — both NATO members — have shown an interest in pooling defensive naval and intelligence-gathering resources, such efforts have met an icy reception in Turkey, a NATO country that has been dominant in the Black Sea and has formal control over the straits that connect it to the Mediterranean. Warming relations between Ankara and Moscow — in particular, Turkey's decision to buy NATO-incompatible S-400 missile systems from Russia — have further challenged approaching the Black Sea dilemma with a united front.

There appears to be growing interest in tackling these matters on Capitol Hill, where a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee has scheduled a Wednesday hearing to examine the United States' security posture in the Black Sea. Tellingly perhaps, the session is titled "Reviving U.S. Policy Toward the Region."

Ultimately, those eager for Biden's team to articulate a comprehensive plan may have to wait for the Pentagon to release its next Global Posture Review, which Austin commissioned after taking office. The document has taken longer than planned to be issued, though officials have indicated it would be completed this year.

Experts warn that absent a marked change in approach, it may be too late to shift the balance away from Russia.

"We are really behind — and while there are some things we could do, it's going to be tough to move the needle," Townsend said.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Microsoft: Russia hacked 14 IT providers</b>  |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://therecord.media/microsoft-says-russias-apt29-hacked-at-least-14-it-service-providers-this-year/">https://therecord.media/microsoft-says-russias-apt29-hacked-at-least-14-it-service-providers-this-year/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Microsoft said on Monday that a Russian state-sponsored hacking group known as Nobelium had attacked more than 140 IT and cloud services providers, successfully breaching 14 companies.</p> <p>The Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) said the attacks were part of a planned campaign that began in May this year.</p> <p>The attacks included spear-phishing campaigns and password-spraying operations that targeted employees of companies that manage IT and cloud infrastructure on behalf of their clients.</p> <p>"We believe Nobelium ultimately hopes to piggyback on any direct access that resellers may have to their customers' IT systems and more easily impersonate an organization's trusted technology partner to gain access to their downstream customers," <a href="#">said Tom Burt</a>, Corporate Vice President for Customer Security &amp; Trust at Microsoft.</p> <p>"We have learned enough about these new attacks, which began as early as May this year, that we can now provide actionable information which can be used to defend against this new approach," Burt said.</p> <p>Indicators of compromise from these attacks are available in an <a href="#">MSTIC report</a> published earlier today.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Nobelium, which the White House tied to <a href="#">Russian intelligence service SVR</a>, is the same threat actor that orchestrated the attack against US software provider SolarWinds in 2020. The group hacked SolarWinds, inserted malware inside one of its software products, and then used the malware to enter the networks of high-value targets, such as government agencies and large corporations.</p> <p>These attacks disclosed today, carried out on a large scale, confirm that the SolarWinds intrusion was deemed a success for the Russian group, which is now trying to replicate it again by attacking other companies part of the software supply chain attack of organizations across the world.</p> <p>Microsoft did not reveal the names of any of the 14 IT and cloud service providers successfully compromised in this campaign.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 SPD not in compliance 2017 anti-bias law</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://publicola.com/2021/10/25/spd-hasnt-fully-complied-with-2017-anti-bias-law-durkan-says-city-has-never-done-sweeps-meth-cleanup-further-delays-shelter-opening/">https://publicola.com/2021/10/25/spd-hasnt-fully-complied-with-2017-anti-bias-law-durkan-says-city-has-never-done-sweeps-meth-cleanup-further-delays-shelter-opening/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>In several recent campaign debates, mayoral candidate (and 12-year city council veteran) Bruce Harrell has pointed to a 2017 <a href="#">bias-free policing ordinance</a> he sponsored as proof of his commitment to police reform. During a <a href="#">debate hosted by the ACLU of Washington last week</a>, his opponent, current city council president Lorena González, countered that the ordinance—which requires anti the Seattle Police Department to conduct anti-bias training and collect data about stops and detentions—didn’t “result in a less-biased police force.”</p> <p>One important detail neither candidate mentioned is that SPD still hasn’t fulfilled all the requirements of the four-year-old law. In a response to a query from City Councilmember Lisa Herbold, interim SPD chief Adrian Diaz <a href="#">informed the council in July</a> that his department hasn’t been collecting data from all traffic stops, as the 2017 law requires. Instead, his department has only collected data on “Terry stops” (also known as stop-and-frisks), in which an officer detains someone who they suspect of “criminal activity.” SPD classifies roughly 70 percent of all stops and detentions as Terry stops.</p> <p>Data <a href="#">released by SPD in January</a> revealed that Indigenous people are nine times more likely to be stopped by police than white people, and Black people seven times more likely. In contrast, officers were more likely to find a weapon on a white person during a Terry stop than on people from any other racial or ethnic group.</p> <p>SPD has not collected data on other common types of stops, including traffic citations. The four-year delay in following the letter of the law, Diaz wrote, came down to outdated reporting protocols: According to Diaz, SPD’s traffic unit only keeps paper records of their stops, warnings and citations. As a result, Diaz wrote, the department “does not have a complete count or description” of the citations and warnings its officers have issued, nor does it have complete demographic data about the people they’ve stopped.</p> <p>According to Diaz, SPD was able to find a “work-around” to collect data about Terry stops, as required by the federal consent decree but not for other types of stops, leaving the department in compliance with the federal court’s orders but out of compliance with a city law. For now, Diaz said the department pieced together an imperfect system for manually collecting data from paper records, supplemented by the limited data about traffic stops collected by the Seattle Municipal Court. Based on that “imperfect data,” SPD estimates that it has conducted 52,764 traffic stops since 2015. According to that incomplete data, only 17 percent of drivers stopped were Black—likely an undercount, given that Black people account for roughly 30 percent of the department’s Terry stops.</p> <p>Councilmember Lisa Herbold, who has led the push to get SPD to comply with the data collection and reporting requirements of the 2017 ordinance, noted that the council asked the department in November 2020 to produce data on all traffic stops by July of this year. If SPD has made any progress toward that goal, “we don’t have evidence of that, because we still haven’t received a report on the data,” Herbold</p> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | said. SPD has not yet responded to Herbold's or PubliCola's inquiries about when the department began to work toward full compliance with the 2017 law. |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 NYC police union sues over mandate</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#nypd-police-covid-vaccine-mandate-deblasio">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#nypd-police-covid-vaccine-mandate-deblasio</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>The largest police union in New York City asked a judge on Monday to allow unvaccinated police officers to continue working, despite the <a href="#">city's recently imposed vaccine mandate</a>, which requires all municipal workers to have received at least one coronavirus vaccine dose by Nov. 1.</p> <p>In a lawsuit filed in Staten Island, which is home to many police officers and has a vaccination rate that lags behind the citywide average, the Police Benevolent Association of New York said it opposed a vaccine mandate for police officers that does not allow the option of being tested weekly instead of being vaccinated.</p> <p>The lawsuit also claimed that the mandate — which the mayor announced last week — does not contain sufficient protections for officers who might object to the vaccines because of religious beliefs. Mayor Bill de Blasio has said that the city will be “offering religious accommodation,” but that “valid religious exemptions” are rare.</p> <p>While most lawsuits trying to stop government vaccine mandates in New York and elsewhere have failed to gain traction, some federal judges have appeared more sympathetic to suits that narrowly attack vaccine mandates for not accommodating religious beliefs.</p> <p><a href="#">Police unions</a> across the country, from <a href="#">Chicago</a> to Washington State, are <a href="#">urging members to resist</a> Covid vaccine requirements — despite Covid being by far the most common cause of <a href="#">officer duty-related deaths</a> this year and last, according to the <a href="#">Officer Down Memorial Page</a>.</p> <p>The New York police union's lawsuit argues that the city did not give officers enough time to seek religious exemptions. Officers seeking exemptions are required to apply by Wednesday — one week after the mandate was announced — to avoid being placed on leave without pay.</p> <p>As of last week, about 70 percent of employees of the New York Police Department had received at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine. The P.B.A., which represents rank-and-file officers, has been generally supportive of an earlier policy that had allowed unvaccinated officers to test weekly for the virus. The lawsuit claims that “test-or-vax” rule had been effective in protecting public safety.</p> <p>The lawsuit was filed on a day when a large crowd of people — including many fire, police, and sanitation workers — marched in protest against the vaccine mandate. Walking across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall, some demonstrators carried large American flags and loudly chanted, <a href="#">“We Will Not Comply.”</a></p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Some exemptions from new US travel rules</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#vaccine-mandate-travel-us">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#vaccine-mandate-travel-us</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Children under the age of 18 who are unvaccinated against the coronavirus, and a limited category of foreigners arriving from countries with low vaccination rates, are among the travelers exempted from <a href="#">forthcoming requirements</a> that will determine who can enter the United States, Biden administration officials said on Monday.</p> <p>The Biden administration has announced that it would lift travel restrictions on Nov. 8 and reopen the United States to fully vaccinated international travelers who had been barred for nearly a year and a half from entering the country by air or <a href="#">crossing the land borders</a>.</p> |



But the new travel system also comes with stringent requirements, and will seal the United States off from most foreigners who have not yet received a vaccine cleared by the World Health Organization or U.S. federal regulators.

On Monday, senior officials detailed opportunities to enter the United States for certain travelers who struggled to obtain a vaccine because of a lack of uniform vaccine eligibility for minors, as well as [limited access to the global supply](#).

Unvaccinated children under the age of 18 will be permitted to enter the United States when the new system takes effect, officials said, [confirming an earlier report from The New York Times](#). Children older than 2 who are traveling with a fully vaccinated adult will need to show a negative coronavirus test within three days of their departure date. Those traveling alone or with an unvaccinated adult will need to show such a result one day before they travel to the United States.

The exemptions will also apply to adults flying from countries where less than 10 percent of the overall population is fully vaccinated, if they can show a “compelling reason” for entering the United States, officials said. That carve-out, they said, would apply to a narrow group of unvaccinated travelers; entering the United States for tourism would not clear the bar for an exemption.

Others who show a U.S. government-issued letter approving an emergency or humanitarian need to travel will also be allowed to cross U.S. borders.

Many leaders in the tourism industry have praised the new rules, which will signal a new chapter in the U.S. recovery from the pandemic. The restrictions imposed in the early days of the pandemic have barred tourists and separated family members from traveling to the United States for nearly 18 months.

But on Nov. 8, the country will open to those who can show that two weeks have passed since they received either a second shot of the two-dose vaccines cleared by U.S. federal regulators or the W.H.O. (in any combination), or a single shot of a one-dose vaccine greenlit by those organizations, like the one from Johnson & Johnson. Digital or print proof of vaccination status will be required.

In addition, fully vaccinated American citizens or legal permanent residents arriving by sea or air will need to show proof of a negative coronavirus test taken within three days of traveling. Those who are unvaccinated will need to test negative within one day of traveling. Those crossing the land border from Canada or Mexico will not have a testing requirement.

Travelers will also be required to provide their personal information for potential contact tracing after arriving in the United States.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Egypt leader ends state of emergency</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/middleeast/egypt-sisi-state-emergency.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/middleeast/egypt-sisi-state-emergency.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>CAIRO — Egypt’s authoritarian president announced Monday that he had lifted a four-year-old state of emergency, undoing powers that had given the government sweeping authority to quash protests, detain dissidents and control everyday life in the most populous Arab country.</p> <p>The proclamation by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, coming amid global criticism of Egypt’s human rights abuses, theoretically ends a decree that had been renewed every three months since 2017. But critics called it a superficial change that would not fundamentally alter the repressive system that has prevailed in Egypt for most of the past 40 years.</p> <p>In a statement posted to his social media accounts on Monday evening, Mr. el-Sisi said he was not extending the state of emergency, which technically expired on Saturday, because the country had finally achieved enough “security and stability” to do without it.</p> |

“Egypt has become, thanks to its great people and loyal men, an oasis for security and stability in region,” he said in the statement. “So, I have decided for the first time in years not to extend the state of emergency nationwide.”

Apart from a few months’ respite in the years after its 2011 revolution, when another [authoritarian leader, Hosni Mubarak, stepped down](#) amid mass protests, Egypt has been under a [state of emergency](#) since the assassination of Mr. Mubarak’s predecessor, Anwar Sadat, in 1981, always in the name of maintaining order and safety.

Over that time, the state of emergency has been the government’s broadest tool for [crushing dissent](#), leading critics to accuse the government of using the threat of terrorism to distract from its human rights abuses.

While rights advocates cautiously welcomed the announcement, they warned that ending the state of emergency would not mean braking repression in Egypt, where thousands of dissidents are in detention, the press and social media are tightly controlled by the state, and public criticism and protests are all but nonexistent.

Even without a state of emergency, few expect the government to change the way it does business.

“I see this as a purely cosmetic move: Sisi has all the repressive powers he needs already, outside of the Emergency Law,” Amy Hawthorne, the research director for the Project on Middle East Democracy, a Washington-based advocacy group, [said on Twitter](#).

She added in a separate message: “Releasing political prisoners and ending the trials of those currently being prosecuted in the state security emergency courts would be much more meaningful.”

For all their skepticism, rights advocates said they hoped the move signaled more loosening of restrictions to come.

“This is something everyone is going to be watching,” said Ragia al-Omran, a rights lawyer. “All eyes on Egypt on that.”

In 2013, when Mr. el-Sisi was the top army general and the defense minister, he led the overthrow of Egypt’s only freely elected president, Mohamed Morsi. The government imprisoned Mr. Morsi and many of his allies, and Mr. el-Sisi became president in 2014.

Mr. el-Sisi imposed the [current national state of emergency](#) in April 2017, after two church bombings killed 47 people in the Egyptian cities of Alexandria and Tanta on Palm Sunday, saying it was necessary to combat terrorism — the same justification Egypt has repeatedly invoked to defend harsh security crackdowns.

Under the state of emergency, Egyptian security services could detain people indefinitely, interrogate suspects, monitor communications and spy on ordinary citizens. The army was empowered to intervene to enforce security if needed. The government could monitor media outlets and censor their content before publication, evict residents and seize property, all with little or no judicial oversight.

Hossam Bahgat, the executive director of the [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights](#), a prominent rights advocacy group, noted that the decision would not affect the political prisoners currently behind bars, nor those currently facing trial in emergency security courts that the government routinely uses to prosecute dissidents.

But, he said, it would prevent the authorities from bringing new cases to trial in such courts, which are presided over by judges chosen by the president and bar defendants from filing appeals.

“It’s a limited but welcome step in the right direction,” Mr. Bahgat said.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>While Mr. el-Sisi did not detail his reasons for lifting the state of emergency, he did so less than two months after the Biden administration said Egypt <a href="#">would not receive \$130 million of the \$1.3 billion it receives in annual American aid</a> unless it made certain human rights reforms. Those conditions have not been made public.</p> <p>The concessions he has made in recent weeks — including ending the state of emergency and dropping legal cases against a handful of civil society and advocacy groups — do little to lessen Mr. el-Sisi’s control of the country’s politics.</p> <p>Egypt’s Constitution calls for any state of emergency to be reviewed every three months. The last three-month period expired last week, but Mr. el-Sisi’s announcement Monday was the first official word that it would not be renewed.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Lawsuit: 911 operator hung up; 2 dead</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/911-dispatcher-discrimination.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/911-dispatcher-discrimination.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>A group of former 911 dispatchers in Pennsylvania contends in a federal lawsuit filed this month that an Allentown man and his nephew died in a fire in 2020 after an emergency operator hung up on the man because he spoke Spanish — a claim that county officials dispute.</p> <p>The operator who answered the call from the man, Heriberto Santiago Jr., on July 27, 2020, made no effort to use a translation service as flames were engulfing his three-story home in eastern Pennsylvania, the lawsuit said.</p> <p>The former dispatchers say in the suit that discriminatory practice was routine at Lehigh County’s 911 emergency call center, and that when they tried to report it and other employee misconduct — such as distributing alcohol and playing the game cornhole during work hours — they were fired or forced to resign.</p> <p>“Caucasian 911 dispatchers stated openly that they ‘do not like taking calls from Spanish people’ and refused to use a ‘language line’ translation service to assist them in communicating with Spanish speaking residents,” the lawsuit said.</p> <p>The county is named as a defendant in the lawsuit, which was filed on Oct. 20 in U.S. District Court in Allentown. The county ardently disputes that an operator hung up on Mr. Santiago before his death.</p> <p>“That allegation is absolutely false,” Thomas M. Caffrey, the county solicitor, said in a phone interview on Monday.</p> <p>Mr. Caffrey said that dispatchers had received two 911 calls about the fire: The first call, at 11:22 a.m., was from someone who might have been a neighbor, and a second, at 11:24 a.m., was from Mr. Santiago. “The fact of the matter is that he spoke to the dispatcher in English,” Mr. Caffrey said of Mr. Santiago. “The dispatcher indicated to Mr. Santiago that police and fire had already been dispatched.”</p> <p>The dispatcher was disconnected from Mr. Santiago and was unable to call him back, Mr. Caffrey said, adding that the police arrived at the home at 11:25 a.m., followed by firefighters at 11:27 a.m.</p> <p>County officials said on Monday that they would make public a transcript of the 911 calls, but they did not give a timetable for its release. They ruled out releasing recordings of the calls, which they said they had initially investigated after the fire and again when they learned of the lawsuit.</p> <p>“We are releasing the transcript that proves that the allegations are completely false!!!” Phil Armstrong, the Lehigh County executive, who is also named as a defendant in the lawsuit, wrote in an email on Monday.</p> |

County officials declined to comment about the other allegations in the lawsuit, which seeks the reinstatement of dispatchers to their jobs and compensatory damages in excess of \$150,000.

The plaintiffs are Justin K. Zucal, David M. Gatens, Francis C. Gatens, John S. Kirchner, Emily M. Geiger, Julie L. Landis and Brandi L. DeLong Palmer.

Fredrick E. Charles, a lawyer for the seven former dispatchers, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday.

Mr. Santiago, 44, died of smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide poisoning, and his nephew, 14-year-old Andres Ortiz, died of thermal injuries, smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide poisoning, [The Associated Press reported](#) at the time of the fire. Their deaths were ruled accidental.

“Mr. Santiago persisted and frantically begged the 911 dispatcher for emergency assistance,” the lawsuit said, adding that the dispatcher “indicated that she did not understand the Spanish language, told Mr. Santiago to speak English and hung up on Mr. Santiago.”

As a result of the dispatcher’s “lack of training, uncaring, negligent, reckless and outrageous conduct in hanging up on Mr. Santiago and failing to take all steps to provide emergency assistance, Mr. Santiago and Mr. Ortiz perished in the fire,” the lawsuit said.

The dispatcher who the lawsuit said had answered Mr. Santiago’s 911 call is not named as a defendant in the case. She did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday.

It was not immediately clear whether Mr. Santiago’s family had a lawyer.

Efforts to reach Mr. Santiago’s family on Monday were not immediately successful.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | 10/25 France returns Benin treasures  |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/oct/25/129-year-journey-nears-end-as-france-returns-benin/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/oct/25/129-year-journey-nears-end-as-france-returns-benin/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>PARIS (AP) – In a move with potential ramifications for other European museums, France is displaying 26 looted colonial-era artifacts for one last time before returning them to Benin - a decision authorities in the West African country described as “historic.”</p> <p>The wooden anthropomorphic statues, royal thrones and sacred altars were pilfered by the French army 129 years ago. The French will have a final glimpse of the objects, from the collection known as the “Abomey Treasures,” in the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac from Tuesday through Sunday.</p> <p>Calixte Biah, curator of the Museum of History of Ouidah, Benin, where the artifacts will first be exhibited, said the occasion was historic.</p> <p>“It’s been more than one century that they have been removed from their historical context. And when you look at the quality of each of these artifacts altogether, you realize that ... there were great artists,” he told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Benin is founding a new museum in Abomey, partly funded by the French government, that will ultimately house the works.</p> <p>President Emmanuel Macron suggested that France now needed to right the wrongs of the past, making a landmark speech in 2017 in which he said he can no longer accept “that a large part of many African countries’ cultural heritage lies in France.” It laid down a roadmap for the return of the royal treasures taken during the era of empire and colony.</p> |

So far, however, France has only turned over one item - a sword handed to the Army Museum in Senegal. And the 26 works going to Benin represent a tiny handful of the more than 90,000 artifacts from sub-Saharan Africa alone held in French museums.

“We see 26 artifacts. There are others, no? So I wouldn’t say that we are ending a process. I’d say we are at the beginning of a process,” Biah said.

“I think it would be decent that other countries which hold African artifacts take the same path as France,” he added.

Earlier this year, Germany started a similar move. The decision was taken that German museums should work on a restitution plan to return to Nigeria artifacts known as the Benin Bronzes next year. These were looted from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin, in what is now southern Nigeria, by a British colonial expedition in 1897.

Yet critics of such moves - including London’s British Museum, in a decades-long tug-of-war with the Greek government over restitution of the Elgin, or Parthenon, Marbles - argue that it will open the floodgates to emptying Western museums of their collections. Many are made up of objects acquired during colonial times.

The British Museum said Monday it is working on a collaboration with Nigeria, linked to the construction of a new museum in the West African country, which will allow to “reunite Benin artworks from international collections.”

French Culture Minister Roselyne Bachelot tried to assuage jitters among European museums, emphasizing that this initiative “will not create a legal precedent.”

A French law was passed last year to allow the restitution of the statues to Benin, and of the sword to Senegal.

But she said that the French government’s law was intentionally specific in applying solely to the 27 artifacts. “(It) does not establish any general right to restitution” and “in no way calls into question” the right of French museums to hold on to their heritage.

The story of the “Abomey Treasures” is as dramatic as their sculpted forms. In November 1892, Colonel Alfred Dodds led a pilfering French expeditionary force into the Kingdom of Danhomè located in the south of present-day Benin. The colonizing troops broke into the Abomey Palace, home of King Behanzin, seizing as they did many royal objects including the 26 artifacts that Dodds donated to the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris in the 1890s. Since the 2000s, the objects have been housed at the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac.

Gaëlle Beaujean, head of the Africa collections at the museum, stressed that “these artifacts have also been seen by artists (in France, and) inspired (architect) Le Corbusier ... In fact, since 1893, they are very much engraved on the French memory as well.”

“They are part, I believe, of a common history,” she added.

Macron is to visit the exhibit on Wednesday. The restitution process “aims at allowing the African youth to have access to their own heritage in Africa, and not in Europe only,” the French presidency said in a statement.

Benin’s Culture Minister Jean-Michel Abimbola called the return of the works a “historic milestone,” and the beginning of further cooperation between the two countries, during a news conference last week. The French Development Agency will give some 35 million euros toward the “Museum of the Saga of the Amazons and the Danhome Kings” to be built in Abomey under a pledge signed this year.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>The official transfer of the 26 pieces is expected to be signed in Paris on Nov. 9, and the art is expected to be in Benin a few days later, Abimbola said.</p> <p>While locals say the decision is overdue, what's important is that the art will be returned. "It was a vacuum created among Benin's historical treasures, which is gradually being reconstituted," said Fortune Sossa, President of the African Cultural Journalists Network.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 UN: greenhouse gas levels hit new record</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/25/climate-crisis-greenhouse-gas-levels-hit-new-record-un-reports">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/25/climate-crisis-greenhouse-gas-levels-hit-new-record-un-reports</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Levels of climate-heating gases in the atmosphere hit record levels in 2020, despite coronavirus-related lockdowns, the UN's World Meteorological Organization has announced.</p> <p>The concentration of carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas, is now 50% higher than before the Industrial Revolution sparked the mass burning of fossil fuels. Methane levels have more than doubled since 1750. All key greenhouse gases (GHG) rose faster in 2020 than the average for the previous decade and this trend has continued in 2021, <a href="#">the WMO report</a> found.</p> <p>The data shows the climate crisis continues to worsen and send a "stark" message to the nations meeting at the <a href="#">Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow</a> in a week's time, according to WMO chief Prof Petteri Taalas: "We are way off track."</p> <p>The negotiators at the summit must deliver action to keep alive the goal of ending GHG emissions by 2050 and avoiding the worst climate impacts. Only stopping emissions will stabilise the levels of the gases and halt the temperature rises that drive the <a href="#">increasing damage from heatwaves, floods and droughts</a>.</p> <p>"At the current rate of increase in GHG concentrations, we will see a temperature increase by the end of this century far in excess of the Paris Agreement targets of 1.5C to 2C," said Taalas. "[Rising levels of GHGs] have major negative repercussions for our daily lives and wellbeing, and for the future of our children and grandchildren."</p> <p>"It is hoped <a href="#">Cop26</a> will see a dramatic increase in commitments," he said. "We need to transform our commitment into action that will have an impact on GHGs. We need to revisit our industrial, energy and transport systems and whole way of life – the needed changes are economically affordable and technically possible. There is no time to lose."</p> <p>The burning of coal, oil and gas is the biggest source of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is the cause of 66% of global heating. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions fell by about 5% in 2020 due to Covid restrictions, compared to 2019. But many billions of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> were still pumped into the atmosphere, meaning the Covid economic slowdown "did not have any discernible impact on the atmospheric levels of GHG and their growth rates", the WMO said.</p> <p>About half of the CO<sub>2</sub> from human activities remains in the atmosphere, with the other half soaked up by oceans and trees and plants on land. But the WMO warned that global heating is damaging the ability of the natural world to take up emissions with, for example, the <a href="#">Amazon now having flipped from absorbing CO2 to emitting it</a> as wildfires, droughts and logging destroy trees.</p> <p>Methane accounts for 16% of global heating and the majority of its emissions are caused by human activity such as cattle farming and fossil fuel production. Methane is a potent and relatively short-lived GHG, so cutting emissions has a rapid impact. Ahead of Cop26, the <a href="#">US and EU pledged to cut methane emissions</a> by 30% by 2030.</p> <p>The other major GHG is nitrous oxide, responsible for 7% of global heating. These emissions mostly come from the overuse of chemical fertilisers in farming and cattle manure. The GHG data is collected by the <a href="#">WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch Programme</a>.</p> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Levels of atmospheric GHGs are higher than ever experienced by the human race, and the highest for 3-5 million years. At that time, global temperature was 2-3C hotter and sea level was 10-20 meters higher than today, said Talaas: “But there weren’t 7.8 billion people then.”</p> <p>“The true success, or failure, of Cop26 will be written in our skies in the form of greenhouse gas concentrations. This WMO report provides a brutally frank assessment of what’s been written there to date. So far, it’s an epic fail,” said Prof Dave Reay, at the University of Edinburgh.</p> <p>“The small window of opportunity to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that meets the Paris climate goals is about to vanish,” he said. “Will this 26th Cop find success where the previous 25 have fallen short? Our atmosphere will bear witness.”</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 UN: half Afghans face hunger this winter</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/oct/25/countdown-to-catastrophe-half-of-afghans-face-hunger-this-winter-un">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/oct/25/countdown-to-catastrophe-half-of-afghans-face-hunger-this-winter-un</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>More than half of Afghanistan’s population is facing acute hunger as the country has been thrown into one of the world’s largest food crises.</p> <p>Almost 23 million Afghans will be hungry due to conflict, drought and an economic downturn that is severely affecting livelihoods and people’s access to food as a <a href="#">harsh winter looms, the UN has warned</a>; an increase of nearly 35% compared with last year.</p> <p>“Afghanistan is now among the world’s worst humanitarian crises – if not the worst – and food security has all but collapsed. This winter, millions of Afghans will be forced to choose between migration and starvation,” the World Food Programme’s executive director David Beasley said, adding that “we are on a countdown to catastrophe”.</p> <p>The Taliban takeover in August has contributed to the economic upheaval as billions of dollars in foreign aid payments – 40% of the country’s gross domestic product – have ceased and almost \$10bn (£7.3bn) of Afghan central bank <a href="#">assets have been frozen</a>.</p> <p>Half of all Afghans will be facing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity between this November and March next year, the UN report said.</p> <p>As desperation grows, the number of beggars throughout Afghanistan’s major cities – including children – has risen as urban residents, for the first time, suffer similar rates of food insecurity to rural communities; a shifting pattern of hunger in the country.</p> <p>In the southern city of Kandahar, a traditional <a href="#">Taliban</a> heartland, the malnutrition ward at Mirwais hospital was packed with women and children, most of them sharing beds with several others. The ward was stuffy and crammed. Mothers sat with their children while fathers or other male relatives – usually not allowed to enter – waited outside. Although the hospital is the biggest health facility in southern Afghanistan, it is poorly equipped.</p> <p>“We have more than 70 children here and numbers are increasing,” said paediatrician Zainullah Zermal, adding that although malnutrition cases usually rise with the approach of winter, this year’s cases were alarming and the hospital was struggling to cope.</p> <p>Many families had travelled significant distances to reach Kandahar, unable to access adequate healthcare nearer home. More than 2,000 clinics across the country have closed due to lack of funds. Eighteen-month-old Memala shared her bed with another patient at Mirwais hospital, her body thin and frail, her gaze absent.</p> |

“We have travelled from Kandahar’s Zhari district,” her mother, who didn’t want to give her name, said; about an hour’s drive away. Zermal explained that, so far, most children had a good chance of survival, but he was worried about the coming weeks.

“We’re now seeing more families arriving from far away. Some of them travel for days to seek medical care as there are no hospitals near them. Winter is coming and that’s when malnutrition usually spikes.”

In Kabul’s Indira Gandhi children’s hospital, the biggest paediatric clinic in the country, doctors said about a dozen children were arriving each day, even though the city’s markets were still stocked with food.

“We don’t have money to afford it,” said Fereshta, a 30-year-old mother. Her six-month-old daughter Zahaba was underweight. Fereshta, who has five children, said that between worrying about money and not having enough to eat, she hadn’t been able to breastfeed her daughter properly.

Only [5% of households have enough to eat](#) every day, the UN said. Many families who fled fighting before the Taliban takeover can’t afford to go back home, instead remaining in makeshift camps with no source of income. [About 3.5 million people](#) remain displaced within the country.

During the Taliban regime between 1996 and 2001, millions of Afghans lived in poverty and on the brink of starvation, and fears are mounting that a similar situation could arise.

The “Islamic Emirate” on Sunday launched a [wheat-for-work scheme](#), saying it would employ 40,000 casual labourers in Kabul who would be paid in wheat instead of cash. During the initiative, set to last for two months, the Taliban pledged to distribute 11,600 tonnes of wheat in the capital.

Cash is largely unavailable, and many government employees are waiting for unpaid salaries.

In Kabul, beggars are visible on almost every street corner. In the city centre, small children chase after shoppers, hoping for a piece of bread.

Setara Amiri, 43, has been begging for the past month. Her husband, who worked as a driver for the previous government, is unemployed. “My children are begging too,” she said, sitting on a busy Kabul pavement. The family used to get by, she said, but not now.

“Each morning I wake up, I worry that we won’t have food at night. I’m begging so my children won’t starve.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Judge rejects bid to stop vaccine mandate   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/federal-judge-rejects-bid-to-stop-washington-vaccine-mandate/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/federal-judge-rejects-bid-to-stop-washington-vaccine-mandate/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A federal judge in Eastern Washington on Monday denied a bid by firefighters, state troopers and others to halt Washington’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate for state workers and emergency responders.</p> <p>A group of workers is suing Gov. Jay Inslee, Spokane Fire Chief Brian Schaeffer, Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste and others. The workers say their civil rights are being violated by the requirement they get vaccinated to continue in their jobs.</p> <p>The plaintiffs filed a motion for a temporary restraining order, but KXLY reports U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Rice denied the motion.</p> <p>In his ruling, Rice wrote: “The Supreme Court has long endorsed state and local government authority to impose compulsory vaccines... Federal courts have routinely analyzed such cases using rational basis and</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>regularly reject cases similar to this one that challenge vaccine mandates based on free exercise of religion.”</p> <p>Rice says the plaintiffs also cited modifications to their contracts as a reason for the court to step in. But the judge said they had not provided copies of collective bargaining agreements in question.</p> <p>He said Inslee’s proclamation requiring vaccines “is well-supported by extensive medical evidence, recommendations by professional organizations, and aligns with other measures already in place in other governmental settings.”</p> <p>Oct. 18 was the deadline for thousands of workers in Washington to prove they’ve been fully vaccinated as a condition of their continued employment. The vast majority complied.</p> <p>Last week officials said more than 1,800 Washington state workers have been fired, resigned or retired due to the state’s COVID-19 vaccination mandate. Numbers released by the governor’s Office of Financial Management show that about 3% of the state’s approximately 63,000-person workforce that was covered by the mandate have left their jobs.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>HEADLINE</b>               | <b>10/24 Gusty winds fell tree onto car; 2 killed</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>                 | <a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/high-wind-causing-power-outages-downed-trees-around-puget-sound">https://komonews.com/news/local/high-wind-causing-power-outages-downed-trees-around-puget-sound</a>  |
| <b>GIST</b>                   | <p>SEATTLE - A strong Pacific storm system that triggered mud flows in wildfire-scarred areas of California also slammed the coasts of Washington state and Oregon Sunday, threatening coastal flooding and causing power outages affecting thousands of customers in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>Wind gusts topping 60 mph also downed trees on Interstate 90 east of Seattle and cut power to more than 150,000 customers in the metro area and around Puget Sound.</p> <p>High winds are expected across western Washington Sunday into Monday.</p> <p>Eastside Fire &amp; Rescue says two people died when a tree fell on their car in the 7700 block of Preston Fall City Rd SE.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff's Office is now investigating.</p> <p>Over 150,000 homes were without power as of Sunday afternoon.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>HEADLINE</b> | <b>10/25 CDC extend cruise lines Covid rules to Jan</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>   | <a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/cdc-covid-19-health-rules-extended-for-cruise-lines-until-january-2022">https://www.q13fox.com/news/cdc-covid-19-health-rules-extended-for-cruise-lines-until-january-2022</a>  |
| <b>GIST</b>     | <p><b>WASHINGTON</b> - Federal health officials on Monday extended for nearly three more months its rules that cruise ships must follow to sail during the pandemic.</p> <p>The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the extension makes only "minor modifications" to rules already in effect. The agency said that after Jan. 15, it plans to move to a voluntary program for cruise companies to detect and control the spread of COVID-19 on their ships.</p> <p>The current regulations, called a conditional sailing order, were scheduled to expire on Nov. 1.</p> <p>The CDC imposed the first no-sail order on cruise lines in March 2020, after most companies sailing in U.S. waters had agreed to suspend voyages. The CDC issue technical guidelines for the industry five months later, and began approving trial sailings this spring.</p> <p>Cruises have since sailed from Florida and other parts of the country. Most lines require adult passengers to show proof of vaccination against COVID-19.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>The CDC noted on Twitter that since it first issued restrictions on sailing, cruise lines have developed and implemented health and safety protocols to manage COVID-19 and <a href="#">have resumed cruising</a>.</p> <p>A cruise industry trade group pledged to continue working with CDC on health measures on board ships. It cited the CDC announcement as evidence that lines have made a successful — if only partial — return since the pandemic shut down the industry worldwide.</p> <p>Laziza Lambert, a spokeswoman for the Cruise Lines International Association, said in a statement that, "Cruising has successfully resumed in the United States" with measures that have limited the risk of COVID-19 for passengers and crew members. She said the CDC announcement shows that the health agency and the Biden administration "recognize the cruise industry's successful resumption of operations."</p> <p>Industry officials have complained that the government took a much tougher stance against cruising — shutting it down entirely last year — than it took toward airlines and other parts of the travel industry.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 DOH: 716,315 cases, 8480 deaths</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article255282061.html#storylink=topdigest_latest">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article255282061.html#storylink=topdigest_latest</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>The Washington state Department of Health reported 5,804 new COVID-19 cases and 29 deaths over the weekend.</p> <p>As of Monday, statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 716,315 and 8,480 deaths. Those numbers are up from 710,511 cases and 8,451 deaths as of Friday. The case total includes 83,495 infections listed as probable. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/23 King Co. vaccine, test verification begins</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/coronavirus/article/what-to-know-about-king-co-vaccine-requirement-16509267.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/coronavirus/article/what-to-know-about-king-co-vaccine-requirement-16509267.php</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Starting Oct. 25, patrons entering most indoor businesses in <a href="#">King County</a> will be required to show proof of being fully vaccinated against <a href="#">COVID-19</a> or submit a negative COVID test.</p> <p>King County health officials and elected leaders <a href="#">announced the order</a> last month, saying it was a logical next step in combating the spread of the coronavirus — especially the highly contagious delta variant, which over the past few months has helped make the COVID-19 pandemic the <a href="#">deadliest in U.S. history</a>.</p> <p>“Though this may seem like a hassle, this extra step is crucial in the fight to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and its variants,” the Washington State Department of Health said in its <a href="#">proof of vaccination guidance</a>. “And it can help you get back to doing the things you love, safely.”</p> <p>The order is not permanent. King County officials said they expect to reassess the need for the order at least six months after it goes into effect, which would be April 25, 2022, if the order goes into effect on Oct. 25 as expected.</p> <p>The order applies to patrons ages 12 and older since children under 12 are not yet eligible to receive a COVID vaccine. Employees of an indoor venue covered by the order are exempt while entering the business for work.</p> <p>The requirement is similar to policies already in place in cities like New York, San Francisco and New Orleans. But how will it work in Seattle?</p> <p>Keep reading for everything you need to know about the new King County order starting Oct. 25.</p> <p><b>Where will I have to show proof?</b></p> |

The order covers most indoor businesses. That includes restaurants, bars, gyms, museums, conferences, conventions, concert venues, movie theaters, stadiums and arenas. The order also applies to outdoor events of 500 people or more.

#### **Does the order apply to outdoor dining?**

The order does not apply to patrons who elect to dine outdoors while at a restaurant or customers picking up takeout orders. Restaurants or bars with 12 or fewer seats will also not be subject to the Oct. 25 order. A separate order for those establishments will go into effect on Dec. 6.

#### **What counts as proof of vaccination?**

The easiest way is to show your CDC-issued vaccination card, or a photo of it. However, if your card was lost or destroyed, the following are also accepted as proof of vaccination in Washington:

- A printout from the [Washington State Immunization Information System](#).
- A verified electronic medical record printout from your medical provider.
- A "Certificate of COVID-19 Vaccination" from [MyIR Mobile](#) (print or screenshot)
- A QR Code from the [MyIR Mobile](#) or a QR code displayed on a mobile app from an endorsed partner of MyIR Mobile.

According to the order, patrons are not required to show personal identification with their proof of vaccination.

#### **What if I'm not vaccinated?**

Individuals who aren't vaccinated may still enter indoor businesses as long as they can show a negative PCR COVID test taken at least 72 hours before entering the venue. Some businesses will have on-site rapid tests available. If a person's rapid test comes back negative — results are typically available within 15 minutes — they will be allowed to enter the business.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Newspaper carrier sues over confrontation</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Newspaper-carrier-files-suit-over-confrontation-16563558.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Newspaper-carrier-files-suit-over-confrontation-16563558.php</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>SEATTLE (AP) — A newspaper carrier involved in a January confrontation with Pierce County Sheriff Ed Troyer has filed a federal lawsuit against the county.</p> <p>The lawsuit alleges Troyer violated the constitutional rights of the carrier, Sedrick Altheimer, by prompting a massive police response with claims to an emergency dispatcher that Altheimer had threatened to kill him, The Seattle Times reported.</p> <p>Troyer walked back those claims amid questioning by a Tacoma police officer, leading the state attorney general's office to charge him last week with false reporting and making a false statement to a civil servant, both misdemeanors.</p> <p>Troyer has denied wrongdoing and called the charges politically motivated. Lawyers representing him and Pierce County did not respond immediately to requests for comment from the newspaper.</p> <p>The lawsuit claims Troyer's actions on Jan. 27 — calling in the police response after trailing Altheimer, who is Black, in his personal SUV and not identifying himself as law enforcement — amount to "false reporting, unreasonable search and seizure, false arrest and malicious prosecution."</p> <p>Altheimer wasn't arrested, but he was frisked and questioned by police. The lawsuit also alleges Troyer acted due to "racial animus" and "reckless disregard for Mr. Altheimer's civil rights."</p> <p>Troyer, who is white, has said he did not know Altheimer's race when he began following him, saying he left his home because he thought he saw a suspicious car.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> | <p>The lawsuit was quietly filed in September in King County Superior Court and transferred to U.S. District Court last week following a request by an attorney for Pierce County. It seeks damages for emotional distress and trauma as well as punitive damages and attorney's fees.</p> <p>Alzheimer in June filed a tort claim against the county as a precursor to the lawsuit, seeking at least \$5 million.</p> <p>Additionally, the Pierce County Council is expected to receive a report detailing findings of another investigation into Troyer's conduct as early as Tuesday. That report, by former U.S. Attorney Brian Moran, is expected to focus on whether Troyer violated ethical standards and department policies, and to recommend potential sanctions if violations are found.</p> <p>Troyer has faced calls for his resignation since January incident was reported publicly in March. He has refused to resign and vowed to fight the allegations against him.</p> <p>"We can either have a safe community where police are allowed to do their job or we can have the cops handcuffed and the criminals run free," he said in a statement last week.</p> |
|-------------------------------|--|

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>HEADLINE</b> | <b>10/25 Sec. of State picked to head DHS CISA</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>   | <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/report-washington-secretary-of-state-kim-wyman-will-be-named-to-biden-administration-election-security-post/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/report-washington-secretary-of-state-kim-wyman-will-be-named-to-biden-administration-election-security-post/</a>   |
| <b>GIST</b>     | <p>Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman is expected to be named to a key election-security position in the Biden administration, according to <a href="#">a report by CNN</a>.</p> <p>Wyman, a Republican, is set to be appointed to lead the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to protect elections from foreign and domestic interference, CNN reported, citing anonymous sources.</p> <p>Wyman's office did not immediately dispute the CNN report.</p> <p>"The Office of the Secretary of State cannot confirm the information included in the CNN article," Wyman spokesperson Kylee Zabel said in an email.</p> <p>Wyman didn't respond to interview requests, and Zabel said she would not be available on Monday. Potential appointees in presidential administrations are often told not to talk until their role is formally announced.</p> <p>If she does take the new position, Wyman would be charged with leading DHS's <a href="#">Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency</a>, CNN reported, saying the appointment would not be official until White House paperwork is completed.</p> <p>The White House did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The reported appointment would put Wyman, a nationally regarded expert on mail-in balloting and security, in a position working with elections officials across the U.S. at a time when many of her fellow Republicans have followed former President Donald Trump in fanning baseless conspiracy theories about the 2020 election.</p> <p>Wyman has pushed back forcibly against such fraud claims, publicly criticizing the recent "audit" of votes in Arizona's Maricopa County as "political theater." She has defended mail balloting as secure and rejected claims by Washington's 2020 GOP gubernatorial candidate Loren Culp, who filed a lawsuit alleging fraud but dropped it after his attorney was threatened with legal sanctions.</p> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Wyman served as Thurston County auditor for a decade before winning election as Secretary of State in 2012. She was reelected in 2016 and 2020. She is the sole remaining Republican to hold statewide office in Washington.</p> <p>Her departure could give Democrats a leg up at claiming the secretary of state office that has eluded them for decades.</p> <p>Upon Wyman's resignation, a temporary successor would be named by Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat.</p> <p>That appointee would serve until the next general election in November 2022, according to Inslee deputy general counsel Taylor Wonhoff, who cited a 2013 legal memo from the state attorney general's office.</p> <p>The winning candidate in the 2022 election would serve out the remainder of Wyman's term through 2024.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 State, Seattle vaccinated workers up</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/number-of-washington-state-seattle-public-workers-getting-vaccinated-inches-up/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/number-of-washington-state-seattle-public-workers-getting-vaccinated-inches-up/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>OLYMPIA — New state and city of Seattle figures show the number of government workers getting their shots continues to inch up amid the coronavirus vaccine mandates.</p> <p>About 275 more Washington state employees have been verified as having gotten their shots <a href="#">since last week's Oct. 18 deadline</a>, according to updated figures released by the Office of Financial Management.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee had ordered state and school employees, as well as hundreds of thousands of health care workers, to be fully vaccinated by that date or lose their jobs. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and King County Executive Dow Constantine imposed similar orders.</p> <p><a href="#">The figures released Monday</a> show slightly fewer state workers left or were fired over the mandate than agencies had originally reported, according to the OFM data.</p> <p>The latest numbers show 1,785 workers left or were fired over the mandate, rather than the 1,887 announced last week.</p> <p>Some agencies were still going through data when they turned over the figures reported last week, and so the status of workers was still being verified.</p> <p>The number of vaccinated state employees now stands at 56,866. That is about 91% of all workers subject to the mandate before the job separations, or 93.5% of remaining and current workers.</p> <p>An additional 3% of workers originally subject to the mandate and who sought religious or medical exemptions were granted accommodations to keep them employed in a role at less risk to the public.</p> <p>The numbers will continue to fluctuate in the coming weeks.</p> <p>For thousands of union and nonrepresented state workers, <a href="#">that Oct. 18 deadline wasn't firm</a>: They still have time in the coming weeks to verify they are vaccinated, start getting shots or get an accommodation approved by the state. Workers that don't do any of those could still lose their jobs, or possibly retire.</p> <p>About 3% of state workers originally subject to the mandate — that's 1,941 employees — currently fall into that category.</p> <p>Last week, the city of Seattle had seen <a href="#">94% of its 11,000 employees vaccinated</a>.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>In an email Monday, Durkan spokesperson Kamaria Hightower wrote that an additional 128 city workers — roughly an additional 1% — have begun their vaccination process.</p> <p>“Across all departments, we have had little to no service impacts” from the mandate, Hightower wrote, but the city will continue to monitor staffing situations closely.</p> <p>“We are working with departments on hiring plans — some of which were also part of the Mayor’s budget,” Hightower wrote in the email, which shared the latest numbers by city departments.</p> <p>At the Seattle Fire Department, 93% of 1,081 workers are now vaccinated.</p> <p>As of Monday, 92% of the Seattle Police Department’s 1,428 active workers are fully vaccinated, according to Hightower. Another 1% have begun the vaccination process.</p> <p>All sworn officers not assigned to patrol are currently working in uniform in case they’re needed to handle 911 calls, according to the city.</p> <p>“This was done in order to reassure the public that 911 calls are the department’s top priority and are being handled,” according to Hightower’s email.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Puget Sound storm recovery continues</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/thousands-still-without-power-in-washington-on-monday-as-storm-recovery-continues/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/thousands-still-without-power-in-washington-on-monday-as-storm-recovery-continues/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Gusty rain continued to blow through the Puget Sound region Monday, as utility crews gradually restored power that had been knocked out Sunday by the stormy weather.</p> <p>Around 16,000 customers across Washington were still without power Monday evening, down from about 100,000 at the height of the outages.</p> <p>Two people were killed near Issaquah during the storm, when a tree collapsed on their car Sunday along the densely forested Preston-Fall City Road Southeast. They had not been identified by the King County Medical Examiner’s Office as of Monday.</p> <p>Due to a strong low-pressure system offshore, the winds in the Seattle area ranged between 15 and 25 miles per hour with gusts near 35 miles per hour over the course of the storm, said Maddie Kristell, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Seattle.</p> <p>The strongest winds were near the coast and north of Everett, she said. Tuesday will be a welcome break from the breezy weather, with slower winds under 20 mph, she said.</p> <p>Some businesses closed for the day on Monday due to power outages, along with at least one school — Medina Elementary in Bellevue, which plans to reopen Tuesday. Inclement weather, toppled trees and utility poles also closed roads across the region, including parts of East Marginal Way and the road to Paradise at Mount Rainier National Park.</p> <p>At the Leschi location of Park Postal, a shipping and private mailbox store that lost power, it was largely business as usual despite the only illumination coming from natural light. Park Postal manager Sandra Andrews said outages happen at least twice a winter in Leschi and in the last three years she’s learned how to stay open when that happens.</p> <p>Just because the phone is disconnected and there is no internet doesn’t mean customers and companies like FedEx and UPS won’t be expecting to deliver and pick up packages, she said.</p> <p>“When power is down I just bring lanterns and sit here and guard the fort,” she said.</p> |

Northgate resident Shawn Graham, whose power was restored Monday morning, threw out food that he suspected had spoiled since his power went out on Sunday afternoon. He said he dodged downed branches while driving in his neighborhood.

Without internet or a microwave, he said he ate fast food for dinner Sunday and spent the day and evening playing board games and talking to neighbors.

“Even during peak-COVID times, I’ve never seen so many people just outside walking,” he said.

Lisa Granade of Magnolia said her lights turned back on around midnight Sunday. Her two kids put on extra layers to stay warm and spent the evening making jack-o’-lanterns with flashlights.

Neither Monday nor Tuesday’s wind forecasts were strong enough to issue a wind advisory. Advisories are typically issued when sustained winds are between 30 and 39 miles per hour and forecasted gusts are near 45 miles per hour.

Seattle City Light and Puget Sound Energy reported 1,700 and 20,600 customers respectively without power at 4:30 p.m. Monday.

Seattle City Light said it expected its work to be finished by Monday evening at the latest, adding that its priorities are to first restore power where life and safety are at risk, then to aid emergency services, then to restore it for customers and residents. Puget Sound Energy said it expects power to be restored by noon Tuesday for the majority of customers in King, Pierce and Thurston counties.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Fallen containers along Vancouver Island</b>  |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/fallen-containers-bobbing-and-drifting-along-vancouver-island/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/fallen-containers-bobbing-and-drifting-along-vancouver-island/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Maritime workers need calmer weather before they can retrieve some 35 containers that have been bobbing near the Strait of Juan de Fuca the past three days, the <a href="#">Canadian Coast Guard</a> said Monday.</p> <p>The containers are drifting parallel to shore, about 12 miles off the southwest coast of Vancouver Island near Tofino, B.C., based on aerial tracking.</p> <p>“Current modelling indicates that the containers will not come ashore,” authorities tweeted.</p> <p>Two reportedly contain toxic chemicals. However, by late afternoon the Canadian Coast Guard said it’s still working with the ship owner to identify which containers went overboard and which burned in a Saturday fire.</p> <p>A gale warning remained in effect late Monday afternoon, with southwest winds at 35 to 45 mph, to slacken a bit overnight, according to <a href="#">Environment Canada</a>. Swells could reach 20 feet.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Zim Kingston, which spilled those containers overboard early Friday, is anchored and smoldering five miles offshore from Victoria, B.C. There “are currently no impacts to human health” for urban residents, but plumes are being monitored, the Coast Guard says.</p> <p>Waters were too choppy for a salvage team to board the boat Monday afternoon, but officials said <a href="#">“there may a weather window later this evening.”</a></p> <p>Monday was the third day officials have responded to the fire, that involves hazardous material. It’s been identified as potassium amyl xanthate, a pale-yellow powder used in the mining industry. In all, 57 tons were aboard in four containers — two that dropped overboard and two that caused the <a href="#">onboard fire at 11 a.m. Saturday</a>.</p> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>If released, potassium amyl xanthate “may be capable of forming flammable dust clouds in air,” says the product’s <a href="#">Canadian materials safety data sheet</a>. “Contact of solid xanthate with moist air has resulted in ignition.” Exposure would irritate the eyes and throat, or in severe cases damage the liver, nerves and cardiovascular system.</p> <p>The 853-foot-long ship, which left South Korea on Oct. 5, lost 40 containers in all when it listed 35 degrees in heavy swells around the strait, on the way to Vancouver, B.C. Five containers were unaccounted for Monday.</p> <p>Firefighting crews have sprayed water on the deck to cool it, but avoided dousing the volatile chemical. Canadian cutters evacuated 16 people from the ship on Saturday, while five crew members stayed aboard Sunday night.</p> <p>A brick-colored liquid surrounds the ship, in a photo tweeted by the Canadian Coast Guard.</p> <p>A salvage crew are on scene but unable to board the container ship due to rough weather, authorities tweeted. They mentioned that Resolve Marine, a Florida-based company with international experience <a href="#">salvaging capsized ships</a>, is part of the response off Vancouver Island.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Turkey president steps back expel threat</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/europe/erdogan-turkey-ambassador.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/europe/erdogan-turkey-ambassador.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>ISTANBUL — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey stepped back on Monday from a <a href="#">threat to expel 10 Western ambassadors</a>, averting a diplomatic storm that analysts and diplomats were warning would bring economic disaster upon Turkey and a lasting rupture in the NATO alliance.</p> <p>In what seemed to be a calculated move, the 10 embassies involved issued identical statements confirming their compliance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, statements which were then welcomed by Mr. Erdogan.</p> <p>In a televised address after a cabinet meeting, he cast the incident as an obligation to protect Turkish sovereignty.</p> <p>“Our will is never to cause a crisis, but to protect the rights and law, honor, interests and sovereign rights of our country. Thus, today the same ambassadors with a new statement turned back from their defamation of our judiciary and of our country,” he said, adding: “I believe from now on they will be more careful about their statements regarding sovereign rights.”</p> <p>The diplomacy saved Turkey from a major blowup with its Western allies, which many feared over the weekend would cause new economic turmoil and political instability in the country of 80 million.</p> <p>Mr. Erdogan had threatened to make the 10 ambassadors, which included diplomats from the United States, France and Germany, persona non grata after they issued a joint statement last week calling for the release of a jailed philanthropist.</p> <p>The envoys had urged the Turkish government to abide by a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights and release the philanthropist, <a href="#">Osman Kavala</a>, who has been held since 2017 despite not having been convicted of a crime.</p> <p>They released the letter Tuesday, on the fourth anniversary of Mr. Kavala’s detention, <a href="#">saying the irregularities in his case</a> “cast a shadow over respect for democracy, the rule of law and transparency in the Turkish judiciary system.”</p> <p>The statement was signed by the ambassadors from Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.</p> |

The Biden administration was the driving force behind the letter, in keeping with what the president's aides have described as his policy of publicly calling out states over human rights violations.

Mr. Erdogan lashed back in characteristic fashion, railing at the statement as an interference in Turkey's internal affairs and evidence that Western leaders did not understand the country's true worth and standing.

In a speech to supporters on Saturday, Mr. Erdogan said he had told his foreign minister that the 10 ambassadors should "immediately be declared persona non grata." "They should know and understand Turkey," he continued. "The day they don't, they will leave."

Such a declaration typically means the individual must leave the host country. However, the ambassadors did not immediately receive any formal notice to leave and by Monday, diplomats were working to avert such an outcome.

Analysts warned the expulsions could cause a disastrous decline of the Turkish economy, which already is struggling with 20 percent inflation. The Turkish lira, which has lost a quarter of its value this year, fell to a new low of 9.75 to the dollar.

On Monday, Abdulkadir Selvi, a senior columnist known for his close ties to Mr. Erdogan, urged caution in the newspaper Hurriyet.

"Who would it hurt to break our relations with 10 countries over Osman Kavala?" he asked. "We need to be coldblooded and act in an attitude befitting great states. With his reaction, President Erdogan spoke to these 10 countries in the language he understood. With its government and opposition, Turkey has shown its stance. But after that, it's time to act calmly."

By the time Mr. Erdogan entered the cabinet meeting in the midafternoon, the embassies had issued their statements, and the president had welcomed them.

Mr. Erdogan's acceptance of a diplomatic resolution was a rare show of humility from the Turkish leader, and showed that when the Western powers delivered a coordinated response, the pressure worked, said Soner Cagaptay, the director of the Turkish research program at the Washington Institute.

"He realized the economy would collapse," he said. Among the countries involved were Turkey's largest trading partners, he added.

"It looks like the 10 ambassadors threw a rope to get us out of the pit we fell into," Namik Tan, a former Turkish ambassador to the United States, [posted on Twitter](#). "Our people jumping on these explanations is also a sign of collusion. That is, we are ready to hold the rope you throw to save us from the pit we have fallen ourselves into, our people say."

Few expected Mr. Kavala to be released after such a spat, however, even if Mr. Erdogan had recognized his limits.

"The end of this crisis does not mean that the Osman Kavala issue is over," Asli Aydintasbas, a senior fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations, [wrote on Twitter](#). "The Kavala issue will continue to be a problem in Turkey's relations with the E.U. and the U.S.A."

Mr. Cagaptay predicted that Mr. Erdogan would present the episode to the Turkish public as a victory, in which he taught the West to respect Turkey. "He will keep using the wording, 'I told the West ambassadors that they cannot interfere in Turkey's affairs.'"

[Return to Top](#)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/quitting-job-great-resignation-georgia-kentucky-idaho/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/quitting-job-great-resignation-georgia-kentucky-idaho/</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>A record number of Americans are <a href="#">quitting their jobs across the U.S.</a>, a trend some have dubbed the "Great Resignation." But the phenomenon is making an outsized impact in some regions: In Georgia, Kentucky and Idaho, more than 4% of workers voluntarily left their jobs in August — the highest rates in the country.</p> <p>Perhaps not coincidentally, those three are among the states with the nation's lowest minimum wage — the federally mandated rate of \$7.25 an hour. States with more generous baseline wages tended to have a lower "quits" rate, or the percentage of workers who handed in their resignations, recent federal labor data show.</p> <p>By comparison, about 1.7% of workers in Washington, D.C., quit their jobs in August, marking the lowest quits rate among all states recorded in August, according to the data. The nation's capital also has one of the nation's highest minimum wages, at \$15.20 an hour.</p> <p>Nationally, almost 3% of workers handed in their resignations in August — a record — the government <a href="#">reported earlier this month</a>. The number of people quitting rose to 4.3 million, far outpacing the number of layoffs from employers, who cut 1.3 million jobs the same month.</p> <p>Several factors could be contributing to the elevated quits rate. On the positive side, it signals that the job market is strong for workers, offering incentives to switch jobs or to simply quit a miserable job in the belief that something better will come along quickly. But with only one month of data, it's unclear yet whether the state-level trends are driven by wages, the mix of industries within a state or other causes, experts said.</p> <p>"A fair amount of the variation in quitting across the country is driven by the types of jobs that are disproportionately done in different parts of the country," said Nick Bunker, director of economic research at Indeed Hiring Lab. "So it's hard to know how much of the variation is driven just by the variation in industry and how much is the difference in labor market conditions," he said.</p> <p>But, Bunker added, wages may play a part. States with lower quit rates may have "more employment in lower turnover industries and a higher likelihood to have a higher minimum wage."</p> <p><b>COVID-19 fears</b></p> <p>Americans are also still struggling with the pandemic and fears about COVID-19 infections: 4 of 10 people who quit their job were either working in leisure and hospitality industries, such as restaurants, or in retail locations. (The share of workers in hospitality jobs in Georgia, Kentucky and Idaho are roughly on par with the national rate.)</p> <p>At the same time, workers are facing higher costs for everything from groceries to housing because of rising inflation. Higher bills may be prompting some people to search for better-paying jobs. Others are quitting to start their own businesses, leading to a <a href="#">record number of entrepreneurs</a> hanging out their shingles.</p> <p>Through September, Americans have filed a record 1.4 million applications to start new businesses that are, in turn, likely to hire employees, according to an <a href="#">analysis</a> of Census data by the Economic Innovation Group (EIG).</p> <p>Among those entrepreneurs is Nick Folmar, who was furloughed by his janitorial company 13 months ago and decided to start Jet Stream Clean, his carpet-cleaning business along the Alabama-Georgia border. Since starting his own business, he said his salary has doubled.</p> <p>"If I'm going to have something, I'm going to have to create it," Folmar <a href="#">told CBS Evening News</a>. "And I'm going to create it with the skills that I have and the passion for the work I like to do."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |



|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Gas prices up \$1.22 over last year   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gas-prices-going-up-last-year/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gas-prices-going-up-last-year/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Gas prices are going up, but that doesn't seem to be deterring drivers. Though gas now costs \$1.22 per gallon more than it did a year ago, according to industry experts, the American public is still filling its tank.</p> <p>"With the U.S. economy slowly recovering from the depths of the pandemic, demand for gas is robust, but the supply is tight," AAA spokesperson Andrew Gross said <a href="#">in a news release</a>. "We haven't seen prices this high since September of 2014."</p> <p>U.S. drivers paid an average of \$3.367 per gallon on Monday, according to <a href="#">Gasbuddy</a>, a price tracker. Last year, gas in the U.S. cost an average \$2.148.</p> <p>North Carolina and Florida saw the biggest jumps in gas prices in the last week, up 14 cents per gallon, followed by Arizona at 12 cents and Rhode Island and New York at 11 cents, according to AAA, which calculated the national average at \$3.38 per gallon. Drivers in California and Hawaii paid the most, at \$4.54 per gallon and \$4.26 per gallon.</p> <p>Still, drivers are hitting the road. Strong demand is hitting U.S. stockpiles hard, while production is still slow because of the pandemic, sending the price of crude oil up, according to AAA.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey told the Associated Press on Sunday that the rise comes as the cost of crude oil surges.</p> <p>Lundberg's survey found the average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline spiked 13 cents over the past two weeks and the average price of diesel jumped 14 cents to \$3.59 a gallon, the AP reported.</p> <p>Crude oil futures reached \$83.76 for West Texas Intermediate and \$85.53 for Brent at close Friday, hitting a seven-year high.</p> <p>While the price of a gallon of gas typically dips after Labor Day, this year's persistent climb prompted <a href="#">President Joe Biden to call for an investigation</a>.</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Extreme weather strikes coast-to-coast  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bomb-cyclone-tornado-noreaster-severe-weather-united-states/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bomb-cyclone-tornado-noreaster-severe-weather-united-states/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>In a matter of days, the weather pattern has shifted from weeks of calm to one of the most dynamic fall patterns in memory. And while autumn is known for its wild swings, the pattern right now is literally off the charts, with the Northeast Pacific experiencing both its strongest and third-strongest storms on record in a matter of just 72 hours.</p> <p>On Sunday, a wicked atmospheric river unleashed <a href="#">more than a foot of rain</a> in parts of California, while a separate system spawned numerous strong tornadoes on Sunday night in the nation's middle. That same system will become yet another bomb cyclone — with hurricane-force wind gusts possible — for the Northeast coast on Tuesday.</p> <p>All three of these systems have amazed meteorologists and, not surprisingly, are consistent with what climate scientists expect from a <a href="#">warming planet</a>.</p> <p><b>Powerful atmospheric river</b></p> <p>After months of one of the driest stretches ever observed in the West, capping off the <a href="#">worst drought</a> in modern history, the Pacific jet stream came alive this past week and dove to the south, following a <a href="#">general cooling of the waters</a> in the Northeast Pacific.</p> |

Last week the powerful jet stream raced across the Pacific Ocean, eventually spinning off a storm system which ended up becoming the third most intense low pressure on record in the Northeast Pacific.

But that turned out to be just a warm-up. This past weekend, a wicked 200 mph Pacific jet stream helped fuel another storm on Sunday, this time even stronger. The pressure dropped to 942 millibars — the equivalent of a borderline Category 3 to 4 hurricane — and became the [most intense cyclone on record](#) in the Northeast Pacific.

A strong jet stream alone does not always materialize into extreme weather. In order for that to happen a process called cyclogenesis needs to occur. Cyclogenesis is the process of a storm forming. It essentially takes the linear energy of a narrow band of intense upper level winds called a jet stream and converts that straight wind into a broad spinning wind, or circulation, like the two images above.

But the wind doesn't just circulate. It needs a mechanism in the atmosphere to force it to spin and in the case of the past few days that force was provided by a strong atmospheric block — a mountain of warm air — over northern Canada. The jet stream could not go through that block, so the wind was forced to divert, going around the block, which initiated rapid spinning and storms with record-breaking low pressure.

This process of storm formation is a natural occurrence, but it can be argued that [climate change](#) helped make these systems more intense. That's because [high-latitude blocking](#) is theorized to be more common in a warming climate, and stronger blocks can lead to stronger cyclogenesis.

Sunday's record-setting Pacific storm helped slingshot an extremely focused atmospheric river of tropical moisture into California. It was rated a [Category 5 out of 5](#).

This storm produced up to 17 inches of rain in central-northern California and broke the all-time record for 24-hour rainfall in Sacramento — a rainfall event so heavy it was likely a once-in-100-year event.

The torrential rain was heavy enough to effectively end what was a very [active wildfire season](#) across the northern half of California and even put a small dent into what, up until this point, had become the worst western U.S. drought in modern history.

While it may seem odd for the weather pattern to switch from extremely dry to extremely wet in an instant, this is a natural characteristic of the Mediterranean climate of the West Coast. However, [there is evidence](#) that climate change is making these episodes of weather whiplash more common now, and the climate models indicate that trend will continue into the future.

### **Midwest tornado outbreak**

At the same time the West was being pounded by a wicked atmospheric river, another storm was moving through the Midwest. While the event was well forecast to produce severe weather and even tornadoes, the ferocity of the storms was somewhat unexpected.

There were several Tornado Emergencies issued by the National Weather Service and in total 15 tornado reports in Missouri and southern Illinois.

On Monday, the storm damage was still being surveyed, but the damage was extensive from winds up to 150 mph.

As the climate has warmed, there has been no clear trend in the number of tornadoes in recent decades. But one trend has emerged as a significant shift: [Tornado frequency is increasing](#) east of the Mississippi River over the Mid-South and decreasing over the area traditionally known as Tornado Alley in the lower Plains. This has meant [tornadoes happening in more densely populated areas](#), most often at night — as they did Sunday night — which makes the storms all the more dangerous.

### **Nor'easter "bomb cyclone"**

The storm responsible for the outbreak of tornadoes in the nation's midsection is now moving east. Just like the Pacific storm, this system will slow, bend and be forced to circulate more intensely by the Canadian blocking. Thus, what happened in the eastern Pacific will replicate itself along the East Coast, just not quite as strongly.

Heavy rain will move from the Ohio Valley into the Northeast Monday night and Tuesday as a coastal storm rapidly intensifies east of New Jersey. By Tuesday afternoon, the storm's barometric pressure will drop down to the equivalent of a Category 2 hurricane.

Storms that exhibit rapid pressure drops often overperform in terms of wind gusts. Eastern Long Island and southeast New England will see gusts over 60 mph, with some potential for wind gusts over hurricane force (75 mph+). With leaves still on the trees and very heavy rain softening up the ground, the potential for downed trees and power lines, and well as power outages, are possible, especially along the coast.

With a prolonged onshore flow, coastal areas prone to flooding should expect at least minor flooding issues at times of high tides. The storm will wind down on Wednesday morning, having dropped 3 to 5 inches of rain in its wake, adding to what has been one a very wet year for the major cities of the Northeast.

While there has not been much research on changes to the intensity of nor'easters due to climate change, the science shows that rain rates and rain totals will continue to increase due to both a warmer atmosphere and warm ocean.

Typically, the energy release from higher rainfall rates can feedback into more intense cyclones. It stands to reason that a warmer ocean will result in more intense storms. As seen in the graphic below, sea surface temperatures off the Northeast coast are 5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. This is not a temporary shift — it is systemic. Research has found that regions like the [Gulf of Maine are warming faster than 99%](#) of the oceans.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE                      | 10/25 Iran attack on US military base in Syria?  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-attack-us-military-base-syria/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-attack-us-military-base-syria/</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>Iran is believed by the U.S. to be responsible for last week's attack on al-Tanf, a base in southern Syria where U.S. troops are located, according to a U.S. official.</p> <p>U.S. officials confirm that five drones were launched from within Syria in the attack on al-Tanf.</p> <p>Last week, U.S. Central Command called the attack "deliberate and coordinated," but no injuries were reported among U.S. troops, U.S. Central Command spokesman Navy Captain Bill Urban said in a statement on the day of the attack.</p> <p>Previous attacks on U.S. troops in Syria have been carried out by militias backed by Iran, usually in Iraq, which always gave Iran a level of deniability, but in this case, it's Iran that is believed to bear direct responsibility.</p> <p>There are about 200 U.S. military troops based at al-Tanf, which is controlled by Syrian opposition forces. American troops advise and train Syrian opposition forces as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, set up in 2014 to contain the threat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Lately, Inherent Resolve has been transitioning to more of an advisory role to assist Iraq and opposition forces in Syria.</p> <p>At the same time, the Biden administration has been trying to get Iran to return to nuclear negotiations. However, the special envoy to Iran, Robert Malley, said Monday that the patience of the U.S. and other countries with Iran's delay in returning to talks is "wearing thin," and diplomatic efforts are in a "critical place."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Covid cases falling; trouble signs loom   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/covid-cases-falling-trouble-signs-arise-winter-looms-80776705">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/covid-cases-falling-trouble-signs-arise-winter-looms-80776705</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Tumbling COVID-19 case counts have some schools around the U.S. considering relaxing their mask rules, but deaths nationally have been ticking up over the past few weeks, some rural hospitals are showing signs of strain, and cold weather is setting in.</p> <p>The number of new cases nationally has been plummeting since the delta surge peaked in mid-September. The U.S. is averaging about 73,000 new cases per day, dramatically lower than the 173,000 recorded on Sept. 13. And the number of Americans in the hospital with COVID-19 has plummeted by about half to around 47,000 since early September.</p> <p>In Florida, Miami-Dade County's mask mandate could be loosened by the end of October if the encouraging numbers continue, and nearby Broward County will discuss relaxing its requirement on Tuesday. The superintendent in metro Atlanta said he will consider waiving mask requirements at individual schools.</p> <p>A high school outside Boston became the first in Massachusetts to make masks optional after it hit a state vaccination threshold. With about 95% of eligible people at Hopkinton High inoculated, school leaders voted to allow vaccinated students and staff to go maskless for a three-week trial period starting Nov. 1.</p> <p>Still, there are some troubling indicators, including the onset of cold weather, which sends people indoors, where the virus can more easily spread.</p> <p>With required mask use reduced in much of the U.S., the University of Washington's influential COVID-19 forecasting model is predicting increasing infections and hospitalizations in November.</p> <p>Also, COVID-19 deaths per day have begun to creep back up again after a decline that started in late September. Deaths are running at about 1,700 per day, up from close to 1,500 two weeks ago.</p> <p>The virus is still striking unvaccinated communities, many of them rural areas in states including North Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska and Minnesota. More than 67% of the nation's eligible population is fully vaccinated, and the Biden administration is getting closer to enacting a workplace vaccine mandate for every business in the country with more than 100 employees.</p> <p>In Alaska, which has ranked at or near the top in per-capita case rates over the last month, hospitals remain strained, but health care workers are not speaking out the way they had, said Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. A recent debate over masks in Alaska's largest city, Anchorage, grew heated, and hospital and public health officials last month reported hostilities toward health care workers related to COVID-19.</p> <p>It's not yet clear, he said, if the state has peaked in terms of cases in this latest surge.</p> <p>"It's not letting up and I think that's the hardest part with this. It's not like you can see hope on the horizon, you know we're going to see a rapid decline and get through it. It just seems to come and go and when it comes it hits really hard."</p> <p>In sparsely populated Wyoming, which has one of the nation's lowest vaccination rates, hospitals are coping with more patients than at any other point in the pandemic. The vast majority of hospitalized patients in Wyoming haven't gotten the vaccine, the state's vaccination rate is only about 43%. Only West Virginia ranks lower.</p> <p>"It's like a war zone," public health officer Dr. Mark Dowell told a county health board about the situation at Wyoming Medical Center, the Casper Star Tribune reported. "The ICU is overrun."</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>In smaller hospitals in North Dakota, many people are getting long-delayed treatments for other ailments, but combined with COVID patients, facilities are pushed to the limit, said Dan Olson, executive director of a network that includes many of those facilities.</p> <p>“You can talk in the morning and they have beds and by afternoon they might be at capacity,” Olson said.</p> <p>In rural Minnesota, a man waited two days for an intensive care bed and later died. Bob Cameron, 87, had gone to his hometown hospital in Hallock with severe gastrointestinal bleeding and COVID-19. Officials searched for space in a larger center.</p> <p>The bleeding exhausted the hospital’s blood supply, and state troopers drove 130 miles (209 kilometers) with new units, but his condition worsened after surgery and he died Oct. 13, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.</p> <p>“We can’t say for certain, of course, that if he got to an ICU bed sooner that he would have survived, but we just feel in our hearts that he would have,” said Cameron’s granddaughter, Janna Curry.</p> <p>During a three-week stretch this month, rural hospitals in Minnesota were caring for more COVID-19 patients than those in the state’s major urban center, Minneapolis-St. Paul.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 Hong Kong 2<sup>nd</sup> conviction new law</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hong-kong-convicts-person-national-security-law-80785172">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hong-kong-convicts-person-national-security-law-80785172</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>HONG KONG -- Hong Kong has convicted a second person under its sweeping national security law for chanting pro-independence slogans, amid a political crackdown in the city.</p> <p>Ma Chun-man was convicted of inciting secession on Monday after he was found to have chanted slogans such as “Hong Kong independence, the only way out” on 20 occasions between August and November of last year.</p> <p>Critics in Hong Kong say the National Security Law erodes freedoms, such as those of expression and assembly, that were promised to the city for 50 years when the former British colony was handed over to China in 1997.</p> <p>Ma is the second person to be convicted under the new law, which outlaws what authorities describe as secession, subversion of state power, terrorism and foreign collusion in intervening in Hong Kong’s affairs.</p> <p>Ma had been arrested multiple times for chanting such slogans before being remanded in custody.</p> <p>Sentencing for Ma was adjourned to Nov. 11, and he faces up to seven years in jail.</p> <p>Tong Ying-kit, the first person to be convicted under the national security law, was jailed for nine years for inciting secession and terrorism after he drove his motorcycle into a group of police officers last July while bearing a flag with the banned slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times.”</p> <p>The majority of the city’s prominent pro-democracy activists have been arrested for taking part in unauthorized assemblies, and dozens of political organizations and trade unions have ceased operation out of concern for their members’ safety under the security law.</p> <p>Over 120 people have been arrested under the security law since it was implemented last June.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/26 New Zealand expands vaccine mandate</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zealand-expands-vaccine-mandate-40-workers-80785240">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zealand-expands-vaccine-mandate-40-workers-80785240</a> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| GIST                          | <p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand -- New Zealand's government said Tuesday it will expand a vaccine mandate to include thousands of workers who have close contact with their customers — including employees at restaurants, bars, gyms and hair salons.</p> <p>The changes will mean that about 40% of all New Zealand workers will need to get fully vaccinated against the coronavirus or risk losing their jobs, up from about 15% previously.</p> <p>Speaking with reporters, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she didn't believe the new rules were an overreach of government power.</p> <p>"This requirement means staff and customers are treated equally and it will play a big part in helping to minimize the spread of the virus in the highest-risk venues by reducing the potential for COVID to enter the business in the first place," Ardern said.</p> <p>Workers who had previously been told they needed to get their shots included teachers and health care professionals.</p> <p>Tuesday's announcement came just a few days after the government set a target of getting 90% of people aged 12 and over fully vaccinated in order to end the cycle of lockdowns.</p> <p>Auckland, the largest city, has been in lockdown for more than two months after an outbreak of the delta variant.</p> <p>As part of its plan to end lockdowns, New Zealand will also require people visiting high-traffic businesses to show vaccine passports to prove they've had their shots.</p> <p>The conservative opposition National Party said there was no need for restrictions such as vaccine passports once vaccination targets were met.</p> <p>"Some businesses will choose to require proof of vaccination. Others will not," said opposition leader Judith Collins in a statement.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 China, Russia warships encircle Japan</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/25/asia/china-russia-naval-flotilla-circles-japan-intl-hnk-ml/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/25/asia/china-russia-naval-flotilla-circles-japan-intl-hnk-ml/index.html</a>  |
| GIST     | <p><b>Hong Kong (CNN)</b>A joint <a href="#">Chinese and Russian</a> naval exercise, in which a flotilla of 10 warships completed a near circle around Japan's main island, has been touted by the two countries as a means of ensuring stability in a volatile region.</p> <p>But analysts say the drills are likely to have the opposite effect, potentially reigniting regional tensions and enhancing claims by the Japanese government that it needs to increase military spending to counter Chinese aggression.</p> <p>The voyage, billed as the first joint China-Russia naval patrol in the western Pacific, saw the vessels sail through the Tsugaru Strait that separates Japan's main island and its northern island of Hokkaido, before heading down the nation's eastern coast and then back toward China through the Osumi Strait off the southern Japanese island of Kyushu.</p> <p>Though foreign vessels are permitted to sail through the Osumi and Tsugaru straits, both of which are regarded as international waters, the maneuvers were closely monitored in Japan.</p> <p>"It will reinforce the conclusion that Japan has already drawn that China potentially presents a threat to Japan and therefore it has to increase its own defense spending and readiness to deal with it," said Drew Thompson, a former United States Defense Department official and a visiting senior research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.</p> |



In a statement Monday, the Japanese Defense Ministry described the exercises, which ran throughout last week, as "unusual."

The China-Russia flotilla consisted of five warships from each country, with a mix of destroyers, frigates, corvettes and support ships.

The Chinese military said the two navies parted ways in the East China Sea on Saturday. "The joint exercise and joint cruise have further developed the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, and effectively improved both sides' capabilities of joint operations, which was conducive to jointly maintaining international and regional strategic stability," Rear Adm. Bai Yaoping of the People's Liberation Army's Northern Theater Command and the deputy commander of the navy said in a statement.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the objective of the joint patrol was to "demonstrate the state flags of Russia and China, maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and also protect facilities of both countries' maritime economic activity."

#### Japan's military buildup

Tensions between China and Japan have spiked in recent years, amid moves by Beijing to assert sovereignty over Japanese-controlled islands.

China has also been stepping up its military pressure on nearby Taiwan, sending dozens of warplanes near the island. Japanese officials have previously tied the security situation in Taiwan to Japan, noting that 90% of Japan's energy is imported through the areas around Taiwan.

Though Japanese military spending pales in comparison with China, it has moved to significantly bolster its defenses, adding state-of-the-art F-35 fighter jets and converting warships to aircraft carriers for them. It's also in the process of adding high-tech destroyers and submarines -- all of which can project its power far from Japanese shores.

The reach of Japan's Self-Defense Force was clear on Monday, as one the warships that will eventually be outfitted to carry F-35s -- the helicopter destroyer JS Kaga -- conducted bilateral exercises with a US Navy aircraft carrier strike group in the South China Sea, almost all of which China claims as its sovereign territory.

And over the summer, Japanese naval forces trained with their counterparts in the [British Carrier Strike Group 21, led by the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth](#), as well as with US Navy ships in the Pacific.

Beijing has kept a close eye on such events, and the joint Russian flotilla is a sign from China that it also has partners, said Alessio Patalano, professor of war and strategy at King's College in London.

"This summer, US and partner navies have considerably elevated the level of interoperability in the west Pacific," he said. "This is something of a weakness for the Chinese, so the joint patrol seems a response to that."

Russia and China have an ongoing military partnership and have conducted a series of joint drills, the most high profile of which was "Vostok 2018," a simulated battle in which a Russian-Chinese coalition fought a fictional enemy.

And in August, Russia and China joined forces once again to use a joint command and control system, with Russian troops integrated into Chinese formations, according to a statement by China's Defense Ministry at the time.

China's 'hypocrisy'

The route taken by the joint Chinese-Russian patrol, through the Osumi Strait at the end of their journey, as well as through the narrow Tsugaru Strait between the main islands of Honshu and Hokkaido earlier in the week, has also attracted a considerable amount of attention.

That's because when the [US Navy or foreign navies transit the Taiwan Strait](#) between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, Beijing condemns them as destabilizing.

For instance, after US and Canadian warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait earlier this month, the Chinese military's Eastern Theater Command accused the two sides of colluding to "stir up trouble" and "seriously jeopardize peace and stability" in the strait.

And at 100 miles (160 kilometers) wide at its narrowest point, the Taiwan Strait is huge compared to the passages between the Japanese islands. The Osumi Strait, for example, is just 17 miles (27 kilometers) wide at its narrowest point.

While the Chinese and Russian warships weren't in violation of international law, a news segment broadcast on Chinese state TV showed just how close they came to Japanese territory.

A reporter seemingly aboard one of the Chinese ships is shown passing through the Tsugaru Strait as the Japanese coastline looms large behind her.

Later, after transiting the strait, the reporter says, "We are now in the western Pacific, and we can see the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force aircraft not far behind us. They have been following us since the beginning of our patrol. In addition to the aircraft, they also sent multiple vessels to track our formation for intelligence gathering."

Thompson said China can't espouse one thing then act in the opposite way.

"You either support norms or you support power politics," he said of the leadership in Beijing. "This makes their virulent anti-foreign rhetoric extremely hypocritical."

So if it's good for China and Russia, it must be fine for the US, Canada and other navies that sail in the Taiwan Strait -- or even the South China Sea.

"They're establishing that it is a very accepted international norm," Thompson said.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Prepare for propane sticker shock   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/prepare-for-propane-sticker-shock-11635026109">https://www.wsj.com/articles/prepare-for-propane-sticker-shock-11635026109</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Propane prices haven't been so high heading into winter in a decade, which is bad news for the millions of rural Americans who rely on the fuel to stay warm.</p> <p>At \$1.41 a gallon at the Mont Belvieu trading hub in Texas, on-the-spot prices are about triple those of the past two Octobers. Of the two main U.S. propane futures contracts, one hit a high earlier this month and the other doesn't have far to climb to eclipse the record it set during the blizzard of 2014. The average residential price tracked by the U.S. Energy Information Administration has jumped by 50% from a year ago, to \$2.69 a gallon.</p> <p>All manner of heating fuels are heading into winter at their highest prices in years and could climb more if the weather is cold. But propane is expected to take the biggest bite out of household budgets.</p> <p>Most U.S. households and businesses are heated with natural gas or electricity, highly regulated markets in which consumers are insulated from price swings in the commodities and usually given time to catch up on payments before they go cold.</p> |

Buying propane is more like filling up a car. The fuel is paid for upon receipt and priced in the free market. Residential propane is delivered by truck, often by small firms over big swaths of countryside. Domestic inventories have been so drained by exports that it isn't out of the question that some could be left for periods without propane no matter what they are able to pay.

"You have no alternative for heat," said Robert Stier, lead petrochemicals analyst at S&P Global Platts. "Your options: Turn down the thermostat, put on a sweater or burn wood in a fireplace."

About 5% of American households are heated with propane. Outside of residential uses, propane fuels forklifts, heats hotel pools and is consumed in huge quantities to make polypropylene, a plastic.

In 2013 the shale boom made the U.S. the world's top exporter of propane, which is produced alongside natural gas and as a byproduct of oil refining. Exports have increased each year since, to about 1.3 million barrels a day. That is about triple the volume exported by the entire Middle East and Algeria, according to S&P Global Platts.

Overseas demand defied economic lockdowns. People stopped flying and driving, yet from India to Italy buyers of the bottled fuel kept cooking and heating their homes. Factories in China that turn propane into propylene—first stop on its way to becoming takeout containers—were too complex to shut down. Back home, patios and outdoor diners were warmed with propane like never before.

In September 2020, U.S. inventories hit a record high. A little more than a year later, with production fairly flat, stockpiles have fallen 19% below what is typical this time of year.

Normally traders spend summer socking away propane to sell in winter, when the futures market shows higher prices. Export markets this year kept prices for prompt deliveries higher than those in winter, said Mr. Stier, who is a former trader. "If the highest price is in July, why store it?" he said.

The last time prices were so high heading into heating season was 2011. That winter wound up being one of the warmest on record and prices fell before autumn ended.

Even if this winter is 10% warmer than forecast, those who heat their homes with propane should expect a 29% bump, on average, the Energy Information Administration said this month. Under the agency's expected scenario, buyers could pay 54% more than the past few years. That increase equates to an extra \$1,600 in the South, about \$1,800 in the Midwest and \$2,000 in the Northeast. If it is 10% colder than forecast, bills could nearly double, the agency said.

Recently 36 U.S. senators asked the Biden administration to loosen the purse strings of a Health and Human Services Department program that helps the poor with their energy bills.

"This funding will help ensure that low-income families and seniors do not have to make the impossible choice between paying for heat and paying for food or medicine," said Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine, where more than 12% of homes are heated with propane.

Suburban Propane Partners LP, which supplies about one million customers in 41 states, is offering budget payment plans and encouraging early fill-ups to avoid potential price spikes and availability issues, said Chief Executive Michael Stivala.

Customers haven't rushed to buy yet, which might be because of broader inflation, Mr. Stivala said.

"Everything they're buying is at an elevated level," he said. "People might not have the ability to allocate more now for the heating season."

[Return to Top](#)

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/25/us-internal-travel-rules-contact-tracing-vaccination-proof-covid-tests.html">https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/25/us-internal-travel-rules-contact-tracing-vaccination-proof-covid-tests.html</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>The White House on Monday said it will require airlines to check U.S.-bound travelers' proof of Covid-19 vaccination and provide contact information to federal officials as part of new rules to lift <a href="#">pandemic</a> travel restrictions on international travel starting next month.</p> <p>The Biden administration earlier this month said it <a href="#">plans to lift pandemic restrictions</a> that barred most visitors from dozens of countries, including the U.K. and Brazil, on Nov. 8, allowing in vaccinated travelers. The rules were put in place first by the Trump administration in early 2020 and then extended by the Biden administration this year.</p> <p>Another change is that inbound travelers, including U.S. citizens, who are unvaccinated, will have to show proof of a negative Covid test taken within one day, up from three days. Vaccinated citizens and visitors will still have to show proof of a negative Covid test that was taken within three days of departure.</p> <p>There will be some exemptions to the vaccine requirements for foreign visitors, including travelers under the age of 18 or those who have medical reasons prohibiting them from getting a vaccine, senior Biden administration officials said. Other exemptions include those traveling on nontourist visas from countries with low vaccine availability. Foreign visitors between age 2 and 17 must still take a Covid test three days before departure if they are traveling with a fully vaccinated adult.</p> <p>Airlines, hotels and other travel companies have urged the U.S. government for more than a year to reopen borders. The U.S. established those restrictions in early 2020 at the start of the Covid pandemic.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 America's gun violence problem</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/america-gun-violence-problem/story?id=79222948">https://abcnews.go.com/US/america-gun-violence-problem/story?id=79222948</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Mass shootings have dominated the headlines, conversations and political debate around America's gun violence problem for decades.</p> <p>Perpetrated in many cases with military-style rifles, they have become a symbol for some of America's obsession with guns, and high-powered ones at that, as well as a propensity for violence by some. Active shooter incidents have been on the rise in the two decades since a dozen students and a teacher were killed at Columbine High School in 1999.</p> <p>Mass shootings and active shooter incidents have also continued to foster a deeply emotional and long-standing debate over both the number of guns and controls over those weapons in the U.S, all to end up with congressional gridlock and familiar arguments about mental health, millions of responsible gun owners and the Second Amendment.</p> <p>It's a state of affairs that has become all too familiar -- and distressing -- to many across the nation and generations. It also makes the U.S. an anomaly in the developed world -- a wealthy country with an endemic gun violence issue and the seeming inability to solve it.</p> <p>So, ABC News decided to dig deeper -- attempting to define the problem, explain key concepts and explore solutions in the multimedia series <a href="#">"Rethinking Gun Violence."</a> We also developed a Gun Violence Tracker to help illustrate the daily toll of gun violence in America in partnership with the independent, nonprofit Gun Violence Archive because of the lack of up-to-date federal data.</p> <p><b>Touches all corners of the country, but not equally</b></p> <p>Gun violence in America is a story that touches every corner of the country but does not affect everyone equally. It comes into shocking focus with mass shootings but also hides behind closed doors with little attention and costs the health care system more than an estimated \$1 billion a year for injuries alone, according to a report released in June by the <a href="#">U.S. Government Accountability Office</a>.</p> |

It is seen as the scourge of urban living in some cases but also penetrates deeply into suburban and rural America. And many times, the victims are the gun owners themselves or their loved ones, either through suicide or accidental shootings. There are also the 2,606 gun deaths by law enforcement between 2015 and 2019, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While homicides account for much of the carnage and terror associated with gun violence, the most recent data from health officials shows that suicides account for the bulk -- over 60% -- of gun deaths in America. And gun injuries, while they rarely make the news, put a tremendous burden on both American families and the health care system, according to health researchers.

If we are serious about tackling the gun violence problem in America, experts say we must look at the complete picture, which they say goes well beyond the headlines and amounts to not one, but several gun violence epidemics begging for solutions.

Dr. Georges Benjamin, the executive director of the American Public Health Association, told ABC News that gun violence goes beyond killings, and frankly, even crime. It has seeped into every aspect of American culture, from active shooter drills in schools and offices to the numbing feeling many people have that they could be shot at any moment, he said.

"We talk about gun violence but you have to think of guns as an epidemic of injury by firearms. That's the more practical way to think about this," he said.

### **Mass shootings get mass attention despite being an 'anomaly'**

The FBI [defines an active shooter](#), a very specific and relatively rare type of shooting incident, as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area."

Active shooter incidents, [according to FBI data](#), have gone from three incidents in 2000 to 40 incidents in 19 states in 2020. During that period, shootings have erupted in schools, businesses and open spaces, to name just a few.

Twenty-six children and educators were killed in 2012 at a school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. Forty-nine people were killed and 53 others were injured four years later at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

As of August 2021, the highest number of casualties resulted from an incident in Las Vegas on Oct. 1, 2017, when a gunman killed 60 people and wounded hundreds of others.

And while the perceived randomness and pervasiveness of these kinds of incidents has led to school lockdowns and an overall sense of dread regardless of age or locale -- they occurred in 43 states and the District of Columbia from 2000-2019, the FBI said -- there is a disproportionate focus on active shooter incidents in addressing overall gun violence in the United States, according to Benjamin.

Active shooter situations represent just one kind of mass shooting. But even that wider category resulted in a mere 1% of all of the 191,897 gun deaths between 2015 and 2019, according to [the Gun Violence Archive](#), a nonprofit which identifies mass shootings as cases in which four or more people are shot, and tracks them through public data, news reports and other sources. Mass shootings accounted for 2.8% of all of the 74,565 gun homicides during that five-year period, the GVA data showed.

"It's a rare anomaly," Kris Brown, president of the nonprofit advocacy group Brady: United Against Gun Violence, told ABC News of mass shootings.

"What you don't hear about and what people don't assess is for every story of a mass shooting, there are, on average, 300 [other] stories, most of them suicide, that are never told," Brown said.

### **The impact of homicides goes beyond urban communities**

About 74% of the nearly 95,000 homicides that took place between 2015 and 2019 were committed using guns, according to the CDC. Homicides, which had been on a downward trend for decades in America, have been increasing significantly since 2014, according to the agency.

The majority of gun homicide victims are young, Black men whose neighborhoods and communities are disproportionately impacted by gun violence as well.

Black Americans accounted for roughly 57% of all gun homicide victims in the country between 2015-2019, the CDC data showed. A majority of the gun homicide victims among Black Americans are those under 35, according to the CDC.

"Black males are disproportionately impacted and have by far the highest rate of gun death, nearly twice as high (1.8x) as the second-highest (and also disproportional) rate of gun death among American Indian/Alaska Native males," according to a CDC analysis of gun violence between 2015-2019. "Black males were more than twice as likely to die by firearms than white males in 2019."

Daniel Webster, the director of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Gun Violence Prevention and Policy, told ABC News that while gun homicides disproportionately affect Black people, it does not negate the fact that over 16,000 white people were killed in gun homicides between 2015 and 2019, according to CDC data. There were 1,071 Asian Americans and 11,213 Latinos killed by guns during this period, the CDC said.

"We go to these common perceptions that overstate things," he said.

And while more than 50% of all gun homicides between 2015 and 2019 took place in the most populated cities in the country, according to the CDC, about half of them did not. Also, individual cities are not equally impacted by gun violence.

The national age-adjusted gun homicide rate was 4.47 per 100,000 between 2015 and 2019, the CDC data showed.

Some highly populated counties, such as Cook County, Illinois, which includes Chicago, had a high gun homicide rate of 12 per 100,000, but other urban areas, such as Brooklyn and Queens in New York City, had rates under four per 100,000, according to the CDC.

At the same time, the data showed high gun homicide rates in less populated areas throughout the country. Several states in the South had among the highest gun homicide rates in the country, with Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi recording rates above 10 per 100,000, according to the CDC.

The gun homicide numbers are more striking in certain counties that have a fraction of the population of major cities.

For example, Mississippi County, Arkansas, which has a population of more than 42,000, according to U.S. Census data, had a gun homicide rate of over 23 per 100,000, the CDC showed.

Benjamin said there is no leading factor behind the gun-related killings, some are premeditated acts of aggression, some are domestic disputes, others are part of other crimes such as robberies, but the one common denominator is access to a firearm.

"I think the public does not understand the full scope, one, but they also think it's an urban problem," he said.

### **Injuries have an impact**

Homicides only tell part of the story of the impact of gun violence on communities in the U.S.

In addition to homicides, 383,500 people were injured by guns between 2015 and 2019 -- roughly 76,700 people a year, according to the CDC.



Brown told ABC News that every year on average 33,242 people are unintentionally shot. Over 98% of these unintentional shooting incidents resulted in injuries and not deaths, according to the CDC data. These include incidents where a gun goes off when someone thought it was unloaded, or a child was playing with a gun, according to Brown.

"A big proportion of [those incidents] is people with guns in their homes," she said.

A report released in June by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that firearm-related injuries resulted in over \$1 billion in initial hospital costs annually. The report said those costs are higher when factoring in longer-term costs such as follow-up visits and physical rehabilitation.

Webster said there is also another factor that's been difficult to quantify: the mental impact just from being threatened by a firearm.

Even if no shots are fired, the mere sight of a handgun in front of a victim's face is enough to do serious damage to mental health, he said.

He added that intimidation is a major factor in domestic violence cases, particularly if the abusive partner is armed.

The [Education Fund to Stop Gun Violence](#) calculates that almost half of all women murdered in the U.S. are killed by an intimate partner, former or current, and more than half of these killings are with a firearm.

"Women are five times more likely to be murdered by an abusive partner when the abuser has access to a gun," according to the organization, which notes that "even when a weapon is not discharged, abusers often use the mere presence of a gun to coerce, threaten, and terrorize their victims, inflicting enormous psychological damage."

### **Suicide: The biggest driver of gun deaths**

Researchers and advocates say not enough attention is paid to gun suicides, which account for over 60% of all gun deaths annually -- 117,000 Americans between 2015 and 2019, according to the CDC.

Half of all suicide deaths in the U.S. are from guns, the data showed. And while only 10% of attempted suicides involve guns, the high percentage of fatalities from gun suicides reflects the fact that roughly 87% of all gun suicide attempts are successful, according to a Brady: United Against Gun Violence analysis of CDC data from those years.

Another 17,770 people were injured by a gun suicide attempt during that period, according to the CDC. While Black men are disproportionately impacted by gun homicides, over 100,000 white Americans died by suicide with a gun between 2015 and 2019, according to the CDC -- representing 85% of all gun suicides during the five-year period.

In fact, the rate of gun suicides among white Americans was more than 2 1/2 times greater than Black Americans, CDC data showed. The majority of gun suicide victims are white men between the ages of 45 and 65.

"We talk about the mass shootings or the kid in the city that's shot, but we're not talking about the other forms of gun violence, the depressed, lonely man who took his own life with a gun," Benjamin said.

Geographic data from the CDC showed that the gun suicides between 2015 and 2019 took place throughout the country and that in 39 states, the per capita suicide rate was greater than the per capita homicide rate. In several states, such as Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee, the suicide rate was higher in rural counties.

In a few locations, such as Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, both the gun suicide and gun homicide rate per 100,000 people was above 10.

Three states -- Arkansas, Alaska and Wyoming -- had rates of suicide higher than 15 per 100,000 people, according to CDC data.

A [study by Everytown for Gun Safety](#), a nonprofit that advocates for gun control and gun safety, found the rate of firearm suicides was five times higher in rural communities than urban communities.

Webster and other researchers added that the lack of media coverage on gun suicides has resulted in a lack of understanding of who is most affected by gun deaths.

"Too many people think gun violence is an urban problem among Black communities," Benjamin said. "They don't realize that it's happening more and more in smaller communities in their neighbor's homes."

### **Overlapping but distinct problems**

Although health researchers acknowledge there is no single solution to stopping gun violence, Webster said there is some overlap among the different forms of gun violence and acknowledging those common threads is the first step to curbing shootings.

For example, roughly 32% of all mass shooting suspects in the last decade died by suicide, according to Everytown for Gun Safety.

"There are a lot of misconceptions that a mass shooting is random. They are typically planned events against some grievance," Webster said. "In most reports, there were warning signs that were missed."

A study released in May in Injury Epidemiology found in 68.2% of mass shooting incidents between 2014 and 2019, the perpetrator either killed at least one partner or family member or had a history of domestic violence.

Access to a gun is more likely to lead a person to use it on more than just one person, Webster said.

"They develop behavior patterns that make them more prone to violence in all of its forms; violence against intimate partners, violence against the community and violence against themselves," he said.

### **Potential solutions**

Experts who have been studying gun violence say people are more likely to find common ground when the focus is taken off mass shootings and it is instead approached as a multi-faceted problem.

Jenna Longenecker, 32, an activist who lost her mother in 2012 to a mass shooting at an Oregon mall and later her father to a gun suicide, told ABC News that the public and political leaders were more willing to consider [a bill that mandated all firearms be secured with a trigger or cable lock](#) in a secured locker after hearing from families who lost someone to gun suicide.

"When someone wants to take their own life it's less scary and harmful than a person running around killing a bunch of people," she said. "That all changes when you know someone who took their own life with a gun."

Paul Kemp, co-founder of the grassroots group Gun Owners for Responsible Gun Ownership, said statistics, testimony and anecdotes from families who lost their loved ones to gun suicides helped sway the Oregon legislature to pass the law this year. According to both Kemp and Longenecker, other gun deaths were mentioned and emphasized by the bill's supporters but it was really the suicides that tipped the scales.

"Because we have these consequences, we're having the conversations," he said.

Oregon State Sen. Ginny Burdick, who was one of the chief sponsors of the bill, told ABC News that residents have raised their voices about the growing number of suicides and demanded action. Although

gun rights groups tried to fight the bill, there was little opposition in the public, even among many gun owners, she said.

For a growing number of residents, the rise in gun violence in all forms, especially suicide, got to the breaking point and they had to speak out.

"It's not a taboo in Oregon. We've been very straightforward about talking about suicide, because it's an epidemic," the senator said.

Kemp said the bill has wide-ranging effects on gun violence. Having a weapon in a locked locker and unloaded lowers the risk of a child getting their hands on it or the weapon being stolen, he argued.

"Most gun owners I know grew up knowing this, that you needed to keep your gun in a secure place away from children," he said.

This year, a similar secure storage bill [was introduced](#) in the U.S. Senate.

Brown predicted that similar legislative action in other states would be more likely if there was a better understanding of the multiple facets of the gun violence problem.

He and other advocates acknowledged that a safe storage law doesn't solve all of the issues surrounding gun violence, such as domestic incidents and gang-related violence, but say that it sheds light on how to build consensus and come up with solutions.

And while some solutions may work for one kind of gun violence and not for others, a comprehensive strategy to address gun violence requires a full picture of the problem, which it turns out looks quite different from the impression the casual observer may be getting, Brown and other activists said.

"Part of the thing we expect from politicians is not just voting on bills, like safe storage and expanded background checks, but also amplifying to their constituents where the violence comes from," Brown said. "That violence happens every day, and if they don't acknowledge it, it will get worse."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 CDC: Delta didn't lead to worse outcomes</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/oct/25/delta-variant-didnt-lead-worse-outcomes-cdc-study/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/oct/25/delta-variant-didnt-lead-worse-outcomes-cdc-study/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>The highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus did not appear to cause more "severe outcomes" in hospitalized patients, a new federal report says.</p> <p>An analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looked at data from 14 states and "found no significant increases in the proportion of hospitalized COVID-19 patients with severe outcomes during the delta period."</p> <p>The report delves into one of the burning questions about the delta variant that dominated the U.K. and the rest of the globe, including the U.S., over the mid-summer.</p> <p>While the variant can be fast-moving and spread widely, the report suggests it doesn't cause more severe disease, as suspected.</p> <p>Instead, it appears to have latched onto unvaccinated people and attacked a younger age group as people began to mingle again after months of isolation.</p> <p>The report found the proportion of hospitalized COVID-19 aged 18 to 49 significantly increased, from 24.7% of all hospitalizations before the delta variant's dominance to 35.8% afterward.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>During a period from January to August described as the “Delta period,” the study found that 71.8% of patients hospitalized were unvaccinated.</p> <p>A separate CDC study last month found unvaccinated persons were 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than vaccinated persons over the spring and summer.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Beijing Olympics tough Covid protocols</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-olympics-playbook-vaccine-quarantine-11635178078?mod=hp_listc_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-olympics-playbook-vaccine-quarantine-11635178078?mod=hp_listc_pos2</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Beijing 2022 organizers unveiled a tough set of Covid-19 protocols for next February’s Winter Olympic Games, including a requirement that almost all participants be vaccinated against the virus or face a 21-day quarantine that would effectively shred their competitive hopes.</p> <p>The requirements outlined in the first of a series of “playbooks” are significantly tighter than those imposed by the Tokyo organizers of the delayed Olympic Games held this summer, <a href="#">confirming signals already sent by Beijing</a>.</p> <p>Competitors and officials will have to arrive in Beijing on direct flights—which for many countries will have to be chartered flights. <a href="#">That rule did not exist for Tokyo</a>.</p> <p>They will have to take dedicated transport to their accommodation, training facilities and competition venues, which will be within what organizers have dubbed a “closed loop,” a concept resembling the “bubble” model <a href="#">deployed by some professional sports leagues</a> in the United States.</p> <p>The idea is that “closed loop” inhabitants will have no contact with the general public or anyone outside of the loop; they only leave it to travel home. They will also have to complete pre-departure testing for Covid, and have daily tests while at the Games. People who test positive will be isolated for an indeterminate period—though organizers say that <a href="#">teams will be able to access the facility where they are held to bring them things and check on them</a>.</p> <p>Athletes considered to be a close contact of somebody who tests positive and have an upcoming competition may still be allowed to participate by otherwise isolating, and testing every 12 hours and then 6 hours before their event.</p> <p>In Tokyo, participants were restricted to locations identified on a preapproved “activity plan”; in practice, they frequently found themselves near the Japanese public. Testing was conducted every few days, and the requirement was erratically enforced. <a href="#">Without a vaccine requirement</a>, their plans rested more heavily on masks and distancing measures that Beijing organizers also say they will deploy.</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic, professional sports leagues like the NFL and NBA have generated rich data that has helped scientists better understand Covid-19. Now, with football season in full swing as the Delta variant spreads, WSJ’s Shelby Holliday looks at what we’ve learned so far.</p> <p>There are very few exceptions available to the Beijing requirement that athletes are fully vaccinated at least two weeks before they leave for China, though the rule does allow some leeway by deferring to <a href="#">competitors’ countries’ own definitions of “fully vaccinated,”</a> meaning that a wide array of vaccines and dosing regimens are possible.</p> <p>“Anyone not fully vaccinated according to the requirements of their country/region of residence will need to quarantine for 21 days upon arrival in Beijing,” the playbook says. It adds that it will allow medical exemptions only based on a review by a joint panel of experts selected by Beijing and the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee.</p> |

Some people not eligible for full vaccination according to their local requirements may also be able to avoid quarantine if they can prove previous infection, the playbook says. The international committees have also said they would help countries get participants vaccinated before they go to China if needed.

Anticipating Beijing organizers' stance, some big Olympic delegations had already introduced their own vaccine requirements for their members.

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee and Canadian Olympic Committee have both said they would require participating athletes to be vaccinated, [although the USOPC has also said that it will consider requests for medical or religious exemptions](#).

Most of the top figure skaters in the U.S. have indicated they have been vaccinated; officials have said that the ski-jumpers are too. And the U.S. Ski & Snowboard national governing body has already been requiring its athletes to show proof of vaccination to participate in a national team camp or competition.

But the rules could pose a greater hurdle for some winter Olympic powerhouses—including Russians, [even if they will again be competing without their national identifier](#) as punishment after the World Anti-Doping Agency found Russia guilty of running a state-sponsored doping program.

Many of Russia's top skating contenders are teenagers—including Alexandra Trusova and Anna Shcherbakova, who are both 17, and Kamila Valieva and Daria Usacheva, who are 15. Russia hasn't yet approved a vaccine for people under 18; trials are under way.

Trusova and Usacheva took gold and silver respectively in Skate America, the first leg of figure skating's international Grand Prix circuit, in Las Vegas on Sunday. Both said there that they were not vaccinated but would be willing to do it if needed.

Some adult skaters in the Russian delegation also said that they had not yet been vaccinated but planned to be.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Holiday season discounts short supply   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/shoppers-find-discounts-are-in-short-supply-this-holiday-season-11635154202?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/shoppers-find-discounts-are-in-short-supply-this-holiday-season-11635154202?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>One side effect of the Covid-19 pandemic heading into the holidays: fewer bargains for shoppers.</p> <p>Industry executives and analysts say consumers should expect to pay closer to full price on a range of products this holiday season, including on Nike sneakers, Coach handbags and Ralph Lauren Polo shirts.</p> <p>Several factors are behind the dearth of deals, including <a href="#">backed-up supply chains</a>, <a href="#">inflation</a> and steps retailers are taking to price their products more efficiently, executives and analysts say.</p> <p>For retailers, the newfound pricing power—after years of rampant discounting and deflation—is boosting profits at a time when sales are still recovering from the pandemic. It is also making some customers think twice about their holiday shopping plans.</p> <p>“I’m definitely going to buy less this year,” said Michelle Keldgord, who lives in Redlands, Calif. “Every time I go to the store, the prices are higher, which is cutting into the budget.”</p> <p>The 28-year-old blogger said she is considering taking her two children to Disneyland for Christmas this year instead of buying gifts, since she has had trouble finding the items on her list. They include a Lego Friends set for her daughter and the Fortnite Battle Bus for her son, as well as dresses, jeans and pajamas.</p> <p>The number of out-of-stock messages online is up 172% compared with January 2020, according to <a href="#">Adobe Inc.</a>, which tracks visits to retail websites and product categories. Of the 18 categories tracked by</p> |

Adobe, apparel currently has the highest stock-out levels, followed by sporting goods, baby products, and electronics.

Adobe expects holiday-season discounts of 5% to 25%, less than the historical range of 10% to 30%.

“This year’s promotional levels have been lower than historical levels, and we’ve been thoughtful about the categories that need promotion,” Adrian Mitchell, [Macy’s](#) Inc.’s finance chief, told investors in September.

At the same investor conference, Katrina O’Connell, Gap Inc.’s chief financial officer, said: “We’re already quite pleased with the fact that we’ve been able to really pull back on discounting in all of our brands.”

Retailers also [held back on discounts last year](#) as pandemic-fueled shortages led many chains to head into the season with less inventory. At the same time, shoppers, some wary of Covid-19, were more likely to buy when they made the effort to enter a store.

Before the pandemic, many retailers were increasing discounts offered over the holiday season nearly every year, which trained customers to wait for deals before buying. For some chains such as Gap and [Home Depot](#) Inc., the [effort to wean shoppers off discounts had been a long battle](#).

Home Depot has moved away from promotional pricing for years, executives have said, and the pandemic aided those efforts. But it has had a difficult time breaking tradition with items like appliances that for decades have been priced high or low, depending on sales, Chief Executive Craig Menear said at a September analyst conference.

Executives at big-box retailers including [Walmart](#) Inc., [Costco Wholesale](#) Corp. and Home Depot said they wish they had more inventory to sell, but lack of adequate supply does help reduce discounting.

Walmart’s inventory level has grown compared with 2020, said Chief Executive Doug McMillon at a September analyst conference. “We would take even more inventory if we could get it, especially in some categories,” he said.

The average discount percentage for men’s apparel purchased over the Labor Day weekend through Brad’s Deals, an online discount marketplace, was 54% this year, compared with 71% a year ago. For shoes, discounts declined to 51% this year, from 62% last year. And sports, fitness and camping gear was discounted on average 31% this year, compared with 50% last year. Each of those categories was also less promotional this year compared with 2019.

Bargains for women’s apparel increased, while those for electronics and homegoods were roughly on par with the last two years.

Casey Runyan, managing editor of Brad’s Deals, said that overall she expects reduced discounting to persist into the holiday season. “Promotions will likely be strategically placed on goods that retailers have in excess stock,” she said. “Those items might not be on top of shoppers’ holiday wish lists.”

BMO Capital Markets analyst Simeon Siegel said there will be a dichotomy to discounting this year. “Shoppers will have to spend up for the hot items, but will find deals on items that get left behind,” Mr. Siegel said. He expects discounts to be most prevalent on seasonal items that are late arriving in stores or warehouses due to the backlog at the ports.

For the first few weeks of October, the percentage of items on sale in aggregate at a handful of brands he tracks declined 5% compared with the same period last year. Nike and Adidas products sold at [Foot Locker](#) had the biggest reduction in promotions, with discounts roughly 30% lower at both brands. Coach, Ralph Lauren and Michael Kors items sold at Macy’s also had lower discount rates.



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>While supply-chain disruptions are the main reason for product shortages, some brands took steps before and during the pandemic to price items more strategically, either by reducing the amount of goods they sell or using data to better target promotions to select customers.</p> <p>“We were inefficient in how we promoted before,” Chip Bergh, the CEO of Levi Strauss &amp; Co., said last week at The Wall Street Journal’s Tech Live conference.</p> <p>Mr. Mitchell, Macy’s finance chief, told analysts in August that the company is using more science to set prices. That has helped it reduce and simplify the depth of its promotions, he said. Mr. Mitchell added that lean inventory levels are helping the chain maximize the amount of merchandise it sells at full price.</p> <p>What’s good for retailers isn’t necessarily good for consumers.</p> <p>Ryan Zamo is a bargain hunter. But the 32-year-old owner of an organic-skin-care company said she isn’t finding many deals this year. “Even if there is a sale, anything you want is out of stock or on back order,” said the Los Angeles resident.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 NYC inches toward Covid endemic phase</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-inches-toward-covid-19-becoming-endemic-11635166801?mod=hp_lead_pos13">https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-inches-toward-covid-19-becoming-endemic-11635166801?mod=hp_lead_pos13</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Each wave of Covid-19 patients that has crashed through the doors of Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens has been more manageable than the last.</p> <p>In the spring of 2020 and the following winter, the hospital needed extra spaces to care for Covid-19 patients in need of oxygen and struggling to breathe. At the height of the Delta surge this summer and fall, Covid-19 patients didn’t fill its ICU.</p> <p>“We’re seeing it more as a chronic problem than as an immediate, huge pandemic problem like we were before,” said Mangala Narasimhan, a critical-care pulmonologist and director of critical-care services at Northwell Health, a large health system in the New York region that includes Long Island Jewish Medical Center.</p> <p>Many public-health experts expect the world will be living with Covid-19 <a href="#">for the long haul</a>. Cases are falling across much of the U.S., but the threat hasn’t passed. Health authorities expect the next several months, when colder weather forces many people indoors where the virus spreads more easily, to present another test of the nation’s pandemic response.</p> <p>Life in the New York City area might be transitioning into a phase in which the virus is a present but diminished danger for most people, some epidemiologists and doctors say. Vaccination rates are higher than U.S. averages, and some people in the region likely have some immunity from infections during past surges. Masks are required in settings including public transit and schools, and officials mandated vaccinations for healthcare workers as well as <a href="#">employees and patrons at bars and restaurants</a>.</p> <p>“New York and New Jersey are going to be in the U.S. where I would look first for the transition to endemicity,” or the point when the virus is still circulating in the background but the disease is more manageable, said Andrew Noymer, an infectious-disease epidemiologist and demographer at the University of California, Irvine. “It’s also, quite frankly, the canary in the coal mine, conversely, if there is a significant winter wave.”</p> <p>The state and most counties surrounding the city are still experiencing what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers high or substantial Covid-19 spread, but the number of confirmed cases at the peak of the Delta wave was about one-third of the peak reported cases last winter. In New York City, the case rate for unvaccinated residents was more than seven times higher than the rate among vaccinated residents in the week ended Oct. 9, and the hospitalization rate was 10 times higher.</p> |

When Covid-19 hit unprepared hospitals in the region in March and April 2020, hundreds of people died each day in New York City alone. Covid-19 hospitalizations at Northwell Health's 23 hospitals peaked at more than 3,500 people at once.

Last winter when the virus swept through the region again, the devastation was comparatively muted, thanks in part to a better understanding of the virus and patient care. The seven-day average of deaths in New York City peaked at more than 80 a day. The peak number of Covid-19 patients at Northwell Health was 1,380 in mid-January.

The wave driven by the Delta variant this summer was the first to reach a partially vaccinated population. Some states with lower vaccination rates experienced record hospitalizations and deaths, while most states with [higher vaccination rates were spared](#) the worst outcomes. Vaccination rates in New York and New Jersey were among the nation's highest; both now have more than 76% of their populations ages 12 and above vaccinated. Covid-19 deaths in New York City didn't rise above 20 a day, and Northwell Health peaked at 348 hospitalized patients in early September.

Dr. Narasimhan said recent Covid-19 patients at Northwell Health have been about 45 years old on average, [younger than during earlier surges](#), in part because older people have gotten vaccinated at higher rates. The quarter of Covid-19 patients at Northwell Health who are vaccinated tend to leave the hospital without reaching the ICU or have compromised immune systems, she said.

Another likely contributor to New York's defenses against the Delta variant, public-health experts say, is some degree of immunity from prior infections that came at a tremendous cost during the previous, huge surges of cases and deaths. A national survey of blood donors published by the CDC estimated that as of August, some 28% of people 16 and older in southeastern New York and northern New Jersey had a detectable level of antibodies to Covid-19 from prior infection. The national rate was about 22%.

[It isn't clear](#) just how strong the immune response after infection is, how long it lasts, or how many previously infected people have gotten vaccinated, as health officials recommend.

With Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations in decline, New Yorkers [are returning to offices](#) at the highest rates since the pandemic began, and [housing demand in the city has surged](#). Public schools are open with precautions such as masks and testing in place. Restaurants and bars are open, with vaccination requirements.

"We have reached more of a continuum and encourage residents to continue to remain vigilant and practice common-sense precautions," said Donna Leusner, a spokeswoman for the New Jersey Department of Health.

Health officials are encouraging residents to get flu and Covid-19 shots if they haven't already [in preparation for the colder months](#) ahead. Public-health experts say vaccinating more people is the key to moving further out of the pandemic crisis, coupled with precautions such as masking indoors.

Wafaa El-Sadr, head of New York City's newly announced Pandemic Response Institute, said groups of residents, such as those who are unvaccinated, remain especially vulnerable to Covid-19 and will likely bear the brunt of future case increases. But she doesn't anticipate a surge as severe as last winter's.

"We're on our way to an endemic phase," she said.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Conservation group drops 'Audubon' name  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/25/audubon-us-conservation-group-name-change">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/25/audubon-us-conservation-group-name-change</a>            |
| GIST     | A leading US conservation group, the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS), has announced it will change its name, due to the "pain" caused by the 19th-century ornithologist and slaveholder John James Audubon. |

The group, which holds wildlife sanctuaries across Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland, said that it had become clear its name did not connect to its diverse set of programmes and that some members and volunteers had objected.

“The mission and vision of the organisation have not changed,” said Lisa Alexander, executive director of ANS.

“The deliberate and thoughtful decision to change our name is part of our ongoing commitment to creating a larger and more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it. It has become clear that this will never be fully possible with the current name.”

Originally called the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, ANS was set up in 1897 as part of a wave of such groups seeking to protect bird species then under threat from hunters.

Audubon achieved lasting fame for his detailed studies and illustrations of American birds, made in the early 19th century.

More recently, he has come under scrutiny for his buying and selling of enslaved people in the 1820s; for his objections to the abolitionist movement; and for writings that portrayed black and indigenous people as inferior to whites.

Audubon, who was born in modern-day Haiti but moved to the US before dying in New York in 1851, [took five human skulls](#) from a battlefield in Texas and sent them to Samuel Morton, a doctor who attempted to determine differences that he claimed showed varying intelligence levels between races.

“We can and must do better to address equity and racial justice in everything we do,” said Diane Wood, incoming board president of ANS. “We are deeply invested in breaking down barriers and acknowledging our part in an exclusionary past.”

ANS said a new name will be chosen following a “deliberate and thoughtful process of listening and learning” with its members and other nature enthusiasts.

The National Audubon Society, the largest group to still hold Audubon’s name, has [acknowledged](#) his actions but has not committed to changing its title.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Experts: worse of pandemic likely behind</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/25/us-covid-coronavirus-pandemic-experts">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/25/us-covid-coronavirus-pandemic-experts</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>The number of new Covid cases and deaths in the United States has been in a steady decline since early September, prompting many infectious disease experts to conclude that the worst impacts of the pandemic in America are probably in the past.</p> <p>But in the same breath, those experts also caution that it’s not yet safe to abandon safeguards against the virus. That’s because parts of the US population and much of the world remain unvaccinated, which could allow for outbreaks and dangerous new variants of the virus to emerge.</p> <p>“My most optimistic assessment is that if we keep vaccinating, sometime during late fall, into the winter, the pandemic phase of Covid will be substantially reduced over much of the United States,” said William Schaffner, an infectious diseases expert at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.</p> <p>He added: “We could move from pandemic to endemic, and endemic means that the virus remains in the community, akin to influenza, smolders along, keeps being transmitted, but the rate of disease that occurs is profoundly diminished, and the impact on individuals and health systems is very much controlled.”</p> |

In early September, the seven-day average of daily new cases in the United States was 166,000, according to data compiled by the New York Times. On 20 October that figure was 76,000, representing a 54% decrease. The seven-day average of new deaths has also declined by 26% over the last month, according to New York Times data.

“We have highly effective vaccines – which, yes, the new [Delta variant] impacts, and we may need to get boosters to protect people who are vulnerable and high-risk – but we have made big strides compared to this time last year, going into colder weather, at least in the northern hemisphere,” said Nahid Bhadelia, director of Boston University’s Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Policy and Research.

Bhadelia also credits some of the “defanging” of the virus to the emergence of new antiviral drugs that reduce some of the worst effects of Covid for infected patients.

Still, while new cases and deaths have declined across much of the US, there have still been surges in some states. For example, Alaska, which trails the US average in its vaccination rate, has seen a significant increase in the number of hospitalizations and deaths over the last month, a trend that forced hospitals to postpone non-emergency surgeries and import staff from other states.

In states with lower vaccination rates, “it’s unclear what the baseline immunity from infections is,” and “that’s going to determine whether or not there are surges and how big those surges are,” Bhadelia said, though she did not expect something on the scale of previous waves.

There are also parts of the world, such as Africa, where only a small percentage of the population has been vaccinated against Covid, largely because of a lack of access to the doses, according to health officials and African leaders.

That could allow new variants of the virus to emerge.

A new variant “could reduce the effectiveness of our current vaccines, which would mean that we would need to re-engineer the vaccines and give everybody boosters again,” Bhadelia explained.

The other factor that complicates when people can stop worrying about the virus is the lack of a clear nationwide goal in terms of the number of cases, other than zero, said Justin Lessler, an epidemiology professor at the University of North Carolina. There have been 23 cases per 100,000 in the United States over the last week, according to the New York Times.

For Lessler, the goal is one case per 100,000 people, because then the risk of hospitalizations due to the virus is relatively negligible and the chances of meeting someone who is infected will be extremely low, he said. Then, Lessler said, he would be willing to eat indoors at a restaurant.

“I think that’s a reasonable number to have in your head as a goal, and I wish we had more of a national conversation about what the goal should be,” Lessler said. “It gives people a sense of what to expect.”

Bhadelia also hopes that the country retains limits on large indoor gatherings in communities with low vaccination rates and high transmission of the virus.

“We have done this every single time – starting with Memorial Day last year – where we just open up too fast, and I think this time, maybe we should be a bit more cautious,” said Bhadelia, who recommended retaining requirements for masks and proof of vaccination or a negative Covid test to attend events.

When asked whether people should attend large indoor gatherings, such as basketball games, Schaffner, the infectious diseases expert at Vanderbilt University, said he would not declare an event is safe “because it implies complete safety”.

Instead, he suggests people at higher risk from Covid, such as seniors and those with underlying conditions like lung disease, conduct a “personal risk assessment: Would I rather stay home and watch it on TV?

“Or am I ready to go, and if I go, will I wear a mask? They will be reducing their risk [with a mask], but if you go to a congregant event, where there are lots of people indoors – particularly if they are excited and cheering – there will be some risk,” Schaffner said.

Also, not everyone in epidemiology is convinced that the US has turned a corner in this pandemic. Shaman described himself as “very neutral” on the subject, in part because of uncertainty over when immunity from vaccines or infections wanes.

That is “going to be very important to understanding how frequently we are going to see new outbreaks of Covid in our communities,” Shaman said. “I’m cautious and waiting for the evidence. If you wanted me to make a prediction for where we will be this winter, I can’t even begin to tell you.”

The infectious disease experts, of course, hope more people in America will continue to get vaccinated. They also hope some safety measures become fixtures of society even after the pandemic. That includes an emphasis on handwashing – even though scientists determined that the virus rarely spreads through touch – and people no longer coming into the office when sick because they see it as a badge of honor.

“We all are a little flippant about when we are sick. People go to their jobs and are, like, ‘It’s just a cough. It’s just a stuffy nose.’ And I would hope that people at least start wearing masks when they are sick. That has become the behavior in a lot of the world, and I think it would be nice if that was something we do” in the United States, said Lessler.

Still, the experts also acknowledge that some people no longer want to hear that they need to be cautious.

“People are exhausted by this,” Shaman said. “The complacency in society is totally understandable, and there are only so many times you can tell people: ‘The virus doesn’t care.’”

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Emergency rental relief ticked up in Sep</b>  |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/25/september-emergency-rental-assistance-eviction/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/25/september-emergency-rental-assistance-eviction/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>The amount of emergency rental assistance reaching tenants and landlords grew slightly from August to September, but the Biden administration, and state and local programs, continue to struggle getting money out the door, especially in the absence of renter protections from a federal eviction moratorium.</p> <p>Last month, nearly \$2.8 billion was spent on rent, utilities and missed payments, and some 510,000 households were reached, according to figures released Monday by the Treasury Department. By comparison, \$2.3 billion was spent <a href="#">in August</a>, reaching 459,000 households.</p> <p>All told, Congress appropriated \$46.5 billion for emergency rental aid between two aid packages. Of the \$25 billion appropriated in December, roughly \$10.3 billion has gone out the door. A March relief package provided the other \$21.5 billion. Almost \$367 million of that bucket had been spent through September, according to Treasury. The top-line figures have ticked up each month, but there has not been the marked ramping up of spending that officials at the White House and Treasury had hoped for.</p> <p>The Biden administration insists that if programs would implement its <a href="#">rules</a> designed to make it as easy as possible for people to apply for aid, this mammoth relief program would build more momentum. But there appears to be an ongoing disconnect with states and cities nationwide that are fundamentally responsible for getting those payments into peoples’ pockets in time to prevent an eviction.</p> <p>No one is satisfied. Yet at the same time, officials are grappling with whether the buckets of money Congress allocated to states and cities ended up being mismatched to the level of need.</p> |

An eviction moratorium put in place by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last year was intended to keep people in their homes during a public health crisis and economic recession. The Biden administration hastily enacted a final moratorium in August, in part to give programs more time to get aid out the door. But when the Supreme Court [struck down](#) that ban a few weeks later, housing advocates and government officials feared a flood of evictions that could swell to a national homelessness crisis.

Yet that grim nightmare has not materialized, and experts are [conflicted over the reasons](#). It's possible some courts are still severely backlogged. In some areas, the eviction moratorium did little to slow filings anyway. Some tenants may have moved on their own to avoid eviction.

Administration officials credit emergency rental assistance and say the aid can go further if programs aren't inundated with a crush of applications all at once.

"There's no question that the 2 million payments [so far], and the path to 3.5 million payments in 2021, is making a meaningful difference in preventing the feared surge in evictions, but it is still not good enough," said Gene Sperling, who is leading the rollout of the American Rescue Plan at the White House. "Every preventable eviction is a preventable heartbreak and even with the stronger performance, we know if we don't do better nationwide, hundreds of thousands of families will still unnecessarily face that painful eviction, or risk of eviction."

Indeed, September data showed some bright spots: The city of Los Angeles more than doubled its disbursements from \$32 million in August to \$72 million in September. The state of Illinois jumped to \$177 million in September from \$62 million in August — an increase of 185 percent.

But even those figures don't change persistent frustrations that state and local programs aren't easing their application rules, or show little interest in improving their systems at all. By law, the rental assistance program directs Treasury to start reallocating "excess" first-round funds, which would allow them to move money from lower-performing programs to those that are leading the pack, for example. That process will soon be underway.

"We anticipate implementing the reallocation process over a period of time, with escalating consequences if a state or locality fails to demonstrate progress in using its [first-round] funds or implementing the flexibilities Treasury has made available," Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo wrote in a letter to grantees last month.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Migrant caravan south Mexico heads north</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/24/migrant-caravan-south-mexico/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/24/migrant-caravan-south-mexico/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Yaneli Castillo fled Honduras with her two young children after gang members killed her husband in front of their house and threatened that she would be next.</p> <p>The 29-year-old arrived in southern Mexico four months ago and filed an asylum claim. She was still waiting for her application to be processed when new threats arrived — text messages from gang members who said they knew where to find her, she said.</p> <p>"I was trying to do the right thing, and waited and waited with all my papers, and they never helped me," she said. "So I decided to join the caravan out of fear."</p> <p>Castillo is one of several thousand migrants who, desperate for work and fleeing poverty and violence, decided to march out of the border city of Tapachula on Saturday. Mexico's National Guard forces tried to stop them, but the contingent pushed through. They continued their trek Sunday, hoping to eventually reach Mexico City.</p> |



The caravan is made up of Central American migrants, as well as some Haitians, many of whom say they have been stuck in legal limbo, waiting for asylum applications to be processed for as long as a year. Under Mexican law, migrants who file a claim in Tapachula must stay there until their claims are processed.

“I just want to be somewhere where I can work and my kids can be safe,” Castillo said. “Whether it is Mexico or the United States, I don’t care.”

The bottleneck in Tapachula — the main point of entry into southern Mexico by land — reflects the country’s struggle to manage the number of migrants arriving in recent months. As of September, authorities had received over 90,000 asylum claims this year, according to official data, roughly 70 percent of which are processed in Tapachula, where the country’s largest immigration detention center is located.

The massive number of applications has overwhelmed an already flawed and underfunded immigration system, especially the agency responsible for processing asylum claims, human rights groups and advocacy groups say. Rather than a caravan, one activist said the swell of migrants pushing north is more akin to a demonstration.

“This is a march for dignity and justice for migrants,” said Luis García Villagrán, a human rights activist from Mexico who joined the march. “The only thing we are asking for is for migrants to be allowed to stay in this country in a legal and organized way.”

Villagran estimated that there are about 4,000 migrants headed toward Mexico’s capital, where many hope their asylum claims will be expedited. That number pales in comparison with the large migrant caravans through Mexico in 2018 and 2019.

“It was only a matter of time for this caravan to happen,” said Raymundo Tamayo, Mexico director for the International Rescue Committee humanitarian aid group. “It is the result of an asylum system in crisis.”

To deal with the massive volume of asylum applications in Tapachula, the Mexican government has turned an Olympic stadium into a temporary processing center, with waiting lines of up to 7,000 people a day.

“Tapachula has become a prison city for migrants,” Villagran said, moments before the contingent encountered another security blockade north of the city on Sunday.

Jose Pineda, from El Salvador, joined the caravan to try to reach Mexicali, a city situated just across the U.S. border, where he once worked. But as he tried to travel north Sunday, immigration officers detained him and dropped him in Tapachula, he said.

“I don’t know what to do or how to survive here any longer,” Pineda said, in tears. “I don’t understand why do they not allow me to leave.”

The trek comes as President Biden faces mounting pressure over immigration. U.S. authorities detained more than 1.7 million undocumented immigrants along the Mexico border during the 2021 fiscal year that ended in September, and arrests by the Border Patrol reached the highest levels ever recorded, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data obtained by The Washington Post.

Conservative critics blame the recent surge on Biden’s decision to overturn some Trump-era policies, including the Migrant Protection Protocols, a program that sends all asylum seekers back to Mexico to wait for their claims to be processed. The White House recently announced plans to reimplement the border policy, also known as “Remain in Mexico,” in mid-November, if the Mexican government agrees to accept asylum seekers, which could further strain its immigration system.

Migrant advocacy groups, meanwhile, have lambasted the Biden administration for continuing to use Title 42, an emergency health provision first used by the Trump administration to rapidly expel migrants.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Activists and human rights groups are warning that Mexico is resorting to arbitrary detentions, deportations and other questionable tactics as it grapples with the rising number of migrants arriving at its border.</p> <p>“Mexico is no longer just a transit country, but a destination as well, a nation where people have the right to claim asylum, which implies a responsibility from the government to be able to offer that,” Tamayo said. “Unfortunately, the system in place is not equipped to respond to the magnitude of the crisis.”</p> <p>By Sunday afternoon, migrants trying to reach Mexico City were exhausted and hungry after walking only a few miles under the scorching sun and stopped at a nearby town to rest.</p> <p>“There is no food for all of us,” Villagran said. “We will need to prioritize women and children, but we need help.”</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Longer, more frequent outages power grid</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/24/climate-change-power-outages/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/10/24/climate-change-power-outages/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>WILMINGTON, N.C. — Every time a storm lashes the Carolina coast, the power lines on Tonye Gray’s street go down, cutting her lights and air conditioning. After Hurricane Florence in 2018, Gray went three days with no way to refrigerate medicine for her multiple sclerosis or pump the floodwater out of her basement.</p> <p>“Florence was hell,” said Gray, 61, a marketing account manager and Wilmington native who finds herself increasingly frustrated by the city’s vulnerability.</p> <p>“We’ve had storms long enough in Wilmington and this particular area that all power lines should have been underground by now. We know we’re going to get hit.”</p> <p>Across the nation, severe weather fueled by climate change is pushing aging electrical systems past their limits, often with deadly results. Last year, the average American home endured more than eight hours without power, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration — more than double the outage time five years ago.</p> <p>This year alone, a wave of abnormally severe winter storms <a href="#">caused a disastrous power failure in Texas</a>, leaving millions of homes in the dark, sometimes for days, and at least 200 dead. Power outages caused by Hurricane Ida contributed to at least 14 deaths in Louisiana, as some of the poorest parts of the state suffered through weeks of 90-degree heat without air conditioning.</p> <p>As storms grow fiercer and more frequent, environmental groups are pushing states to completely reimagine the electrical grid, incorporating more batteries, renewable energy sources and localized systems known as “microgrids,” which they say could reduce the incidence of wide-scale outages. Utility companies have proposed their own storm-proofing measures, including burying power lines underground.</p> <p>But state regulators largely have rejected these ideas, citing pressure to keep energy rates affordable. Of \$15.7 billion in grid improvements under consideration last year, regulators approved only \$3.4 billion, according to a national survey by the NC Clean Energy Technology Center — about one-fifth.</p> <p>After a weather disaster, “everybody’s standing around saying, ‘Why didn’t you spend more to keep the lights on?’ ” Ted Thomas, chairman of the Arkansas Public Service Commission, said in an interview with The Washington Post. “But when you try to spend more when the system is working, it’s a tough sell.”</p> <p>A major impediment is the failure by state regulators and the utility industry to consider the consequences of a more volatile climate — and to come up with better tools to prepare for it. For example, a Berkeley Lab <a href="#">study</a> last year of outages caused by major weather events in six states found that neither state</p> |

officials nor utility executives attempted to calculate the social and economic costs of longer and more frequent outages, such as food spoilage, business closures, supply chain disruptions and medical problems.

“There is no question that climatic changes are happening that directly affect the operation of the power grid,” said Justin Gundlach, a senior attorney at the Institute for Policy Integrity, a think tank at New York University Law School. “What you still haven’t seen ... is a [state] commission saying: ‘Isn’t climate the through line in all of this? Let’s examine it in an open-ended way. Let’s figure out where the information takes us and make some decisions.’ ”

In interviews, several state commissioners acknowledged that failure.

“Our electric grid was not built to handle the storms that are coming this next century,” said Tremaine L. Phillips, a commissioner on the Michigan Public Service Commission, which in August held an emergency [meeting](#) to discuss the problem of power outages. “We need to come up with a broader set of metrics in order to better understand the success of future improvements.”

### **Five disasters in four years**

The need is especially urgent in North Carolina, a state that has [declared](#) a federal disaster from a hurricane or tropical storm five times in the past four years. Among them was Hurricane Florence, which brought torrential rain, catastrophic flooding and the state’s worst outage in over a decade in September 2018.

More than 1 million residents were left disconnected from refrigerators, air conditioners, ventilators and other essential machines, some for up to two weeks. Elderly residents dependent on oxygen were evacuated from nursing homes. Relief teams flew medical supplies to hospitals cut off by flooded roads. Desperate people facing closed stores and rotting food [looted](#) a Wilmington Family Dollar.

“I have PTSD from Hurricane Florence, not because of the actual storm but the aftermath,” said Evelyn Bryant, a community organizer who took part in the Wilmington response.

The storm reignited debate over a \$13 billion proposal by Duke Energy, one of the largest power companies in the nation, to reinforce the state’s power grid. A few months earlier, the state had rejected Duke’s request for full repayment of those costs, [determining](#) that protecting the grid against weather is a normal part of doing business and not eligible for the type of reimbursement the company had sought.

After Florence, Duke offered a smaller, \$2.5 billion plan, along with the argument that severe weather events are one of seven “megatrends” (including cyberthreats and population growth) that require greater investment, according to a PowerPoint presentation included in [testimony](#) to the state. The company owns the two largest utilities in North Carolina, Duke Energy Carolinas and Duke Energy Progress.

Vote Solar, a nonprofit climate advocacy group, objected to Duke’s plan, saying the utility had failed to study the risks of climate impacts. Duke’s flood maps, for example, had not been updated to reflect the latest projections for sea level rise, they said. In testimony, Vote Solar claimed Duke was using environmental trends to justify investments “it had already decided to pursue.”

The United States is one of the few countries where regulated utilities are usually guaranteed a rate of return on capital investments. That business model incentivizes spending regardless of how well it solves problems for customers and inspires skepticism. Ric O’Connell, executive director of GridLab, a nonprofit group that assists state and regional policymakers on electrical grid [issues](#), said utilities in many states “are waving their hands and saying hurricanes” to justify spending that would do little to improve climate resilience.

Duke Energy spokesman Jeff Brooks acknowledged that the company had not conducted a climate risk study but pointed out that this type of analysis is still relatively new for the industry. He said Duke’s grid improvement plan “inherently was designed to think about future needs,” including reinforced substations

with walls that rise several feet above the previous high watermark for flooding, and partly relied on federal flood maps to determine which stations are at most risk.

Brooks said Duke is not using weather events to justify routine projects, noting that the company had spent more than a year meeting with community stakeholders and using their feedback to make significant changes to its grid improvement plan.

This year, the North Carolina Utilities Commission finally approved a set of grid improvements that will cost customers \$1.2 billion. But the commission reserved the right to deny Duke reimbursement of those costs if it cannot prove they are prudent and reasonable. The commission's general counsel, Sam Watson, declined to discuss the decision, saying the commission can comment on specific cases only in public orders.

The utility is now burying power lines in "several neighborhoods across the state" that are most vulnerable to wide-scale outages, Brooks said. It is also fitting aboveground power lines with "self-healing" technology, a network of sensors that diverts electricity away from equipment failures to minimize the number of customers affected by an outage.

As part of a settlement with Vote Solar, Duke Energy last year [agreed](#) to work with state officials and local leaders to further evaluate the potential impacts of climate change, a process that Brooks said is expected to take two to three years.

### **High costs create hurdles**

The debate in North Carolina is being echoed in states across the nation, where burying power lines has emerged as one of the most [common proposals](#) for insulating the grid from high winds, fires and flooding. But opponents have balked at the cost, which can run in the millions of dollars per mile.

In California, for example, Pacific Gas & Electric wants to bury 10,000 miles of power lines, both to make the grid more resilient and to reduce the risk of sparking wildfires. Its power equipment has contributed to multiple deadly wildfires in the past decade, including the 2018 Camp Fire that killed at least 85 people.

PG&E's proposal has drawn scorn from critics, including San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo, who say it would be too slow and expensive. But Patricia Poppe, the company's CEO, told reporters that doing nothing would cost California even more in lost lives and property. The plan has yet to be submitted to the state, but Terrie Prosper, a spokeswoman for the California Public Utilities Commission, said the commission has supported underground lines as a wildfire mitigation strategy.

Another oft-floated solution is microgrids, small electrical systems that provide power to a single neighborhood, university or medical center. Most of the time, they are connected to a larger utility system. But in the event of an outage, microgrids can operate on their own, with the aid of solar energy stored in batteries.

In Florida, regulators recently [approved](#) a four-year microgrid pilot project, but the technology remains expensive and unproven. In Maryland, regulators in 2016 rejected a plan to spend about \$16 million for two microgrids in Baltimore, in part because the local utility made no attempt to quantify "the tangible benefits to its customer base."

In Texas, where officials have largely abandoned state regulation in favor of the free market, the results have been no more encouraging. Without requirements, as exist elsewhere, for building extra capacity for times of high demand or stress, the state was ill-equipped to handle an abnormal deep freeze in February that knocked out power to 4 million customers for days.

Since then, Berkshire Hathaway Energy and Starwood Energy Group each proposed spending \$8 billion to build new power plants to provide backup capacity, with guaranteed returns on the investment of 9 percent, but the Texas legislature has not acted on either plan.

New York is one of the few states where regulators have assessed the risks of climate change and pushed utilities to invest in solutions. After 800,000 New Yorkers lost power for 10 days in 2012 in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, state regulators ordered utility giant Con Edison to evaluate the state's vulnerability to weather events.

The resulting [report](#), which estimated climate risks could cost the company as much as \$5.2 billion by 2050, gave ConEd data to inform its investments in storm hardening measures, including new storm walls and submersible equipment in areas at risk of flooding.

Meanwhile, the New York Public Service Commission has aggressively enforced requirements that utility companies keep the lights on during big storms, [fining](#) utility providers nearly \$190 million for violations including inadequate staffing during Tropical Storm Isaias in 2020.

"At the end of the day, we do not want New Yorkers to be at the mercy of outdated infrastructure," said Rory M. Christian, who last month was appointed chair of the New York commission.

### **The price of inaction**

In North Carolina, as Duke Energy slowly works to harden the grid, some are pursuing other means of fostering climate-resilient communities.

Beth Schrader, the recovery and resilience director for New Hanover County, which includes Wilmington, said some of the people who went the longest without power after Florence had no vehicles, no access to nearby grocery stores and no means of getting to relief centers set up around the city.

For example, Quanesha Mullins, a 37-year-old mother of three, went eight days without power in her housing project on Wilmington's east side. Her family got by on food from the Red Cross and walked a mile to charge their phones at McDonald's. With no air conditioning, they slept with the windows open in a neighborhood with a history of violent crime.

Schrader is working with researchers at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte to estimate the cost of helping people like Mullins. The researchers estimate that it would have cost about \$572,000 to provide shelter, meals and emergency food stamp benefits to 100 families for two weeks, said Robert Cox, an engineering professor who researches power systems at UNC-Charlotte.

Such calculations could help spur local governments to do more to help vulnerable communities, for example by providing "resilience outposts" with backup power generators, heating or cooling rooms, Internet access and other resources, Schrader said. But they also are intended to show the costs of failing to shore up the grid.

"The regulators need to be moved along," Cox said.

In the meantime, Tonye Gray finds herself worrying about what happens when the next storm hits. While Duke Energy says it is burying power lines in the most outage-prone areas, she has yet to see its yellow-vested crews turn up in her neighborhood.

"We feel," she said, "that we're at the end of the line."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 CDC director: relish Halloween outside  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/10/25/halloween-cdc-director-trick-or-treating/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/10/25/halloween-cdc-director-trick-or-treating/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>It's time to prepare your Halloween ensembles. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky encouraged Americans to get outside and relish the holiday.</p> <p>"I would say, 'Put on those costumes, stay outside and enjoy your trick-or-treating,' " Walensky said when asked on "Fox News Sunday" what she would say to children about the holiday coming up this weekend.</p> |

Walensky added that she “wouldn’t gather in large settings outside and do screaming like you are seeing in those football games, if you are unvaccinated — those kids that are unvaccinated.”

“But if you are spread out doing your trick-or-treating, that should be very safe for your children,” she said.

Earlier this month, Anthony S. Fauci, the nation’s top infectious-disease expert, also [encouraged](#) Halloween activities. “Particularly if you’re vaccinated, you can get out there. You’re outdoors for the most part,” he said in an Oct. 10 interview on CNN. “I mean, this is a time that children love.”

Walensky’s latest remarks come as families [await a decision](#) on [coronavirus](#) vaccine eligibility for 5-to-11-year-olds.

The Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine [appears poised](#) to become available for children in that age group in the coming weeks. A Food and Drug Administration advisory committee will meet Tuesday to discuss the data to inform the agency’s decision, which will then be examined by the CDC.

During Sunday’s interview, Walensky said she was “really hopeful that in that proper review we will get to a place where we have a vaccine for 5-to-11-year-olds.”

If and when that happens, she noted many parents will be ready to get their children vaccinated right away, while others may need convincing.

“We have to do all of that hard work again — education, communication — so that we can get parents comfortable with getting their children vaccinated, where so many parents are already,” she said.

The CDC leader also talked about the rest of the upcoming holiday season, acknowledging that it’s “critically important that we gather, that we be together with our family and friends during these holidays,” and urging “prevention strategies” that will make gatherings safer.

“So, what I would say is get yourself vaccinated before you gather,” Walensky said. “It’ll absolutely be safer if you’re vaccinated. Any activity that is outdoors is safer than it is if it’s indoors. And if you’re gathering multiple households, make sure as many people are vaccinated as possible, so you can protect the people who are vulnerable, who might not yet be vaccinated — our young children, our elderly.”

In the United States, more than 57 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, including nearly 69 percent of people 18 and older, according to [data tracked](#) by The Washington Post. In the past week, new daily reported coronavirus cases [dropped](#) more than 12 percent, and covid-related hospitalizations decreased 8 percent.

“I’m encouraged by numbers coming down right now,” Walensky said Sunday. “But I have learned that we can’t be complacent and that we need to be humble, and that the virus tends to find places that are under-vaccinated. So as our case numbers come down, we need to continue to do the hard work of getting more and more people vaccinated.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Arizona pandemic outlook worries experts   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/10/25/arizona-coronavirus-cases-surge-experts/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/10/25/arizona-coronavirus-cases-surge-experts/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Arizona has caught up to New York when it comes to reported deaths per capita — even though the latter was <a href="#">ravaged by the coronavirus</a> early in the pandemic before treatments or vaccines were developed.</p> <p>Some health experts worry Arizona could be headed for a deepening crisis as winter approaches. Although average daily deaths from covid-19 remain much lower than during the state’s second wave in January,</p> |



Arizona experienced a 138 percent increase in the seven-day rolling average of daily new deaths per 100,000 people last week, according to [data collected by The Washington Post](#).

“It’s bad,” Will Humble, executive director of Arizona’s Public Health Association, told The Post.

Some public health experts say Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey (R) lifted pandemic-related restrictions in March without putting in place measures to mitigate the risks of reopening, causing cases to rise again in July just as the more contagious [delta variant was becoming the most common coronavirus](#) variant in the United States.

Now, Ducey — who [is vaccinated and has urged others](#) to get vaccinated but argues it should be a personal choice — is engaged in a battle against the federal government on several fronts in an effort to [prevent mask mandates in schools](#) and [vaccine mandates in workplaces](#) in his state.

Last week, the [U.S. Labor Department warned Arizona](#) (and two other states) about its “continued failure to adopt” [a Biden administration emergency public health directive](#) requiring, among other measures, that health-care workers receive paid time off to get vaccinated and to recover from potential side effects. Ducey called the reprimand, which could result in the federal government stripping the state of its ability to enforce its own workplace safety standards, “nothing short of a political stunt and desperate power grab.”

Arizona on Saturday reported [3,145 cases of the coronavirus and 30 deaths](#) from covid-19 — twice as many daily cases as the state was reporting three months ago. The governor’s office did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Humble attributes this increase to the delta variant, a lack of public health restrictions and pockets of vaccine resistance among the elderly, a more vulnerable population.

More than 52 percent of Arizona’s population is fully vaccinated, according to Post data, but “we’ve hit a brick wall when it comes to vaccinating vaccine-resistant seniors,” explains Humble, “so that’s what’s causing the continued influx into the hospital system.” He says that won’t change; “they’re just going to end up getting infected,” he predicts.

During the summer of 2020, Arizona’s health authorities [activated crisis standards of care](#), and hospitals began rationing medical supplies. The situation has improved, but the persistently high levels of cases and deaths following a long period of low community transmission are concerning, according to [a recent report](#) written by Joe K. Gerald, associate professor at the University of Arizona’s Zuckerman College of Public Health, and Patrick Wightman, a researcher at the school’s Center for Population Science and Discovery.

“Despite the knowledge and ability to do better, absolute rates of community transmission remain higher this year than last among all age groups but particularly among children,” the report published last week states, with the caveat that “improvements [are] being observed this year while rates were worsening this time last year.”

Humble also says it’s not clear how successful a campaign to roll out [pediatric coronavirus vaccines among 5-to-11-year-olds](#) will be if it receives Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approval to kick off next month. He estimates that only a portion of parents in Arizona “are enthusiastic” about getting their child vaccinated — a step he and other experts say is crucial to reducing community transmission at a time when [children between 5 and 11 have a higher per capita weekly incidence](#) of the coronavirus than 65-to-74-year-olds nationwide.

Only [21 percent of Arizonans](#) under the age of 20 are vaccinated, according to state data, compared to 93 percent of people ages 65 and up. “It’s not like the kids are ending up in the hospitals, but they are starting chains of transmission [to] vaccine-resistant adults and seniors who do end up in the hospitals,” Humble says.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>Arizona is not the only state with a concerning public health outlook: According to <a href="#">Post analysis</a>, daily deaths have increased by 267 percent over the past seven days in Alaska, by 143 percent in Montana and by 100 percent in Rhode Island.</p> <p>Still, it's a particularly sensitive time for public health as winter approaches, bringing with it a potential "twindemic" of influenza and rising covid-19 infections, and as evidence begins to suggest that the protection from infection conferred by the coronavirus vaccines can start to wane after a few months.</p> <p>Arizona ranks 38th in the nation in terms of share of people ages 65 and over who have received a booster dose, Gerald and Wightman note in their report.</p> <p>"With waning vaccine efficacy and a potentially short duration of acquired immunity, herd immunity is not achievable," they say. "As winter approaches, more previously vaccinated and previously infected individuals will become susceptible."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Record setting rain, flooding Calif.</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/10/25/atmospheric-river-record-rain-california/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/10/25/atmospheric-river-record-rain-california/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>A historic atmospheric river drenched central and northern California Sunday with record-setting rains. The high-impact event dented the region's drought and quelled the fire season but triggered flooding and mudslides.</p> <p>Up to a half-foot of rain fell at low elevations and over a foot in the mountains. Both San Francisco and Sacramento established new rainfall records for October, just after enduring a historic shortage of precipitation.</p> <p>At the highest elevations of the northern Sierra Nevada, multiple feet of snow fell, a crucial addition to water resources in the drought-plagued region.</p> <p>Atmospheric rivers are long, narrow swaths of exceptionally moist air, sometimes sourced from the tropics, that can produce excessive amounts of precipitation. This river was <a href="#">rated a level 5 out of 5</a> in the San Francisco Bay area by the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes in La Jolla, Calif.</p> <p>The parent "bomb cyclone," the rapidly intensifying ocean storm that drove the atmospheric river into the West Coast, proved the most intense on record offshore the Pacific Northwest. It had a minimum air pressure reminiscent of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, bringing hurricane-force winds over the open ocean waters and <a href="#">50 to 80 mph gusts</a> along the coast from Seattle to San Francisco.</p> <p>Two people <a href="#">were killed near Seattle</a> when a falling tree crushed their car. The combination of wind and rain left up to 170,000 customers without power in California on Sunday; that number had diminished to around 115,000 on Monday morning. More than 150,000 customers lost power around Seattle.</p> <p>The atmospheric river was winding down in intensity Monday while sinking south toward Southern California, but a look at the long-range pattern suggests the likelihood of continued atmospheric river events in the coming weeks.</p> <p><b>Record precipitation and moisture</b></p> <p>The atmospheric river drenching the West Coast unleashed record rainfall and moisture that brought deluges and flooding to the rain-starved region. Sacramento ended a record 212 day-long streak last Monday, reversing course and suddenly experiencing its wettest day on record on Sunday — a whopping 5.44 inches of rain fell in 24 hours, equating to what would ordinarily fall in two and a half months.</p> <p>In downtown San Francisco, 4.02 inches of rain fell Sunday, <a href="#">its wettest October day on record</a> and fourth wettest day of any month in records dating to the 1849 during the Gold Rush.</p> |

San Francisco International Airport also recorded 4.02 inches of rain on Sunday, bringing its monthly total to 5.5 inches, or roughly 10 times the average for the month. No measurable rain fell there between April and September.

Just north of San Francisco, in Marin County, several locations in the coastal mountain range saw over a foot of rain. Mt. Tamalpais [registered 16.55 inches](#) since Saturday and [nearly 27 inches since the middle of last week](#). The Marin County fire department [tweeted](#) that it responded to 650 weather-related calls between Sunday and Monday, including three water rescues, 20 vehicle accidents, 163 downed trees and 185 public assists for flooding issues.

In Nevada, Reno [received 2.82 inches of rain](#) between Sunday and Monday, an October record. Here are some other select totals from California:

- Paradise in Butte County, devastated by a wildfire in 2018, measured 7.57 inches Sunday.
- White Cloud in Nevada County northwest of Lake Tahoe saw 8.29 inches. Blue Canyon to the south received 10.4 inches, setting an all-time 24 hour record.
- Redding set an Oct. 24 record of 2.99 inches.
- Oroville set an Oct. 24 record of 4.57 inches.

Atmospheric rivers transport their moisture most effectively at the mid-levels of the atmosphere, which is why higher elevations wound up with the jackpot totals.

The atmospheric river itself was transporting about a ton and a half of moisture per second over every horizontal meter across the core of the moisture stream. That led to a record October PWAT, or precipitable water index, at Oakland. PWATs describe how much water is present in a column of atmosphere, the 1.62 inches measured in a weather balloon Sunday night was off the charts for October.

Snow totals measured in feet occurred in the highest terrain; several locations above 8,000 feet reported 24-hour snow depth changes of over 170 inches between Sunday and Monday. Heavy snow [forced the closure of Interstate 80](#) for a time. Extreme winds ripped across mountain peaks, with gusts topping 100 mph in some locations. Mammoth Mountain [clocked a peak gust of 159 mph](#).

While snow levels were initially quite high, at over 8,000 feet, they were dropping on Monday. As of Monday morning, [29 inches had fallen at Donner Pass in the northern Sierra Nevada](#), which is at an elevation of around 7,000 feet, and it was still snowing.

### **Flooding, mudslides and debris flows**

The National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center hoisted a rare level 4 out of 4 “high risk” of excessive rainfall and flooding in the northern Sierra Nevada. In San Francisco, residents could be seen working to clear storm drains [at the intersection](#) of 31st and California. The Santa Rosa Fire Department tweeted footage depicting roaring rivers as water gushed down streets and threatened structures.

The high rainfall rates, which topped an inch per hour, were particularly problematic within the burn scars of wildfires that torched parts of central and northern California in the past several years. The Weather Service issued flash flood and debris flow warnings for the Dixie, Caldor, River and Creek fire burn scar areas.

“Excessive rainfall over the warning area will cause mudslides near steep terrain,” it wrote. “The mudslide can consist of rock, mud, vegetation and other loose materials.”

On Sunday, a landslide occurred along State Route 70 near Tobin, Calif., on the Butte-Plumas County line, forcing the closure of the highway. The area was within the burn scar of the Dixie Fire, which burned nearly a million acres this year.

“If you are near a burn scar, it may be too late to evacuate,” tweeted the Weather Service in Sacramento on Sunday. “Do not attempt to cross a debris flow. Take shelter in the highest floor of your home.”

### **A record-setting ‘double bomb’**

Steering the atmospheric river into the Golden State was a swirl of low pressure several hundred miles off the coasts of Washington and Oregon. The low brought wind gusts to around 60 mph in coastal stretches of the Pacific Northwest and wave heights of up to 20 feet, but it was a powerhouse storm over the open ocean with hurricane-force winds. It intensified at an extreme rate — twice the pace of “deepening,” or strengthening, needed to qualify for “bombogenesis.”

That lead to an air pressure similar to that of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, signifying the vacuum-like effect of the storm as it spiraled in air from all directions. It proved the lowest air pressure on record in that part of the ocean.

The storm will rapidly weaken west of British Columbia in the coming 24 hours, lashing Vancouver Island with wind and rain before dissipating. The tandem atmospheric river, meanwhile, will dissipate as it drifts south and fragments.

### **Looking ahead**

More than 86 percent of California was in “extreme” or a top-tier “exceptional” drought last week according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. While the drenching [will make a dent in the deficit](#), the years-long problematic paucity will be far more difficult to erase. Due to the storm’s warm nature, less of the precipitation fell as snow; snow is more useful from a water resources standpoint since it can easily be stored in the Sierra Nevada as it melts more gradually. That creates a more reliable reservoir of water.

Data indicates that climate change is causing the expansion of California’s dry season (and fire season) deeper into October and November as the wet season becomes compressed. This latest storm proved an anomaly and a welcome nail in the coffin for 2021’s fire season in central and northern part of the state.

While some rain is predicted in Southern California on Monday, [generally between 1 and 2 inches](#), it will be insufficient to meaningfully relieve drought conditions there or end its wildfire season.

A glance at the extended pattern indicates that more atmospheric rivers will be on the way in the coming weeks, though none in the forecastable future appears as intense as that which befell the West Coast over the weekend.

The sudden switch from record-dry to record-wet conditions in California is what Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California at Los Angeles, has referred to as “precipitation whiplash.” A dramatic example of this occurred in 2016 when California had its wettest year on record after a historic drought from 2012 to 2016.

In 2018, Swain and colleagues [published a study](#) that concluded human-caused warming of the climate will increase such whiplash in the future, projecting a 25 to 100 percent increase in dry-to-wet precipitation events. “Such hydrological cycle intensification would seriously challenge California’s existing water storage, conveyance and flood control infrastructure,” the study stated.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 Unexpected pandemic consequence   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/us/garbage-delays-labor-jacksonville-florida.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/us/garbage-delays-labor-jacksonville-florida.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — One man in Florida’s largest city wrote to officials that the smell and flies were getting bad, after six weeks of waiting for his yard waste to be picked up. Other residents sent photos of overflowing bins, stacked plastic bags and littered lawns. At one point, the fed-up neighbors of Almira Street in Jacksonville threatened to rent a truck and dump their trash on the steps of City Hall.</p> <p>The disruption to America’s economy created by the coronavirus pandemic has led to mass cancellations of <a href="#">school buses</a> and <a href="#">ferries</a>, to <a href="#">rental car shortages</a> and a bottleneck of cargo ships <a href="#">waiting</a> at seaports. And, in cities like Jacksonville, it has created a small but growing indignity: garbage left out to rot.</p> |

In the grand scheme of suffering, there are bigger problems. But it has become yet one more example of a public service that most people take for granted but is no longer working right.

“What good” are public servants, one frustrated man emailed the city, “if they can’t even maintain basic services??”

The pandemic delays have not been limited to Florida. Dozens of communities have experienced similar trouble. [Atlanta](#) began offering \$500 signing bonuses to trash haulers, and garbage pickups were delayed in [Denver](#). In Collingswood, N.J., just outside Philadelphia, municipal workers had to pick up the trash themselves earlier this summer after the borough’s waste hauler announced that [it had no drivers](#): “We’re just not coming in,” the mayor said he was told.

In Jacksonville, the delays in waste hauling became so bad in late summer and early fall that piles could be seen all over town. The city prioritized trash when it could, but yard debris was left to linger.

On a recent afternoon, mounds of tree branches, palm fronds and grass cuttings spilled onto the road in several residential neighborhoods. Some heaps were as tall as small children. The waste was browning and settled into deep grooves in the ground. It was easy to see why people worried that the lingering waste might attract mosquitoes or vermin.

Mayor Lenny Curry announced a temporary suspension of curbside recycling this month so that city sanitation crews and private contractors would have more time to clear the backlog of trash and yard waste. That was after the city had tried to pick up the slack by paying employees from the parks, public works and fire departments nearly \$100,000 in overtime to take extra shifts driving garbage trucks.

Mr. Curry, a Republican, said in a recent interview in his minimalist office in downtown Jacksonville that he did not come to the decision lightly and agreed to the suspension only once the city found collection sites for residents to drop off their recyclables.

“This is the only solution to get this moving again,” said Mr. Curry, whose administration saw a drop in complaints after recycling was suspended. “If your garbage isn’t picked up, you’re not happy.”

By the end of August, the city had withheld nearly \$1 million in payments to its three private waste-hauling contractors for failing to complete their routes and hired a new contractor to replace one of the companies. But that had proved insufficient, especially when it came to yard waste. The landscape in Florida is lush, subdivisions take pride in their landscaping and palm trees are forever shedding large, thorny fronds that can turn into projectiles during storms.

The angry complaints from residents kept pouring in. Some demanded a refund of their solid waste fees. “It would be nice to know what day they will pick up in my neighborhood, which is really beginning to look like CRAP,” Dennis Connors wrote on Sept. 2, noting that his yard waste had been uncollected for nine weeks, and his recycling for four.

The blame for the trash problems around the country lies with a labor shortage that predates the pandemic but has been exacerbated by it, said David Biderman, executive director of the Solid Waste Association of North America.

“Recruiting and retaining workers is perhaps the biggest challenge that solid waste companies and local governments have with sanitation,” he said. “Covid was the perfect storm.”

Picking up garbage has never been glamorous: Workers start early and spend many hours in the heat, rain and cold. Average wages across the United States are just \$40,000 a year. And what they do literally stinks.

The commercial driver’s license required for a driver’s job can just as easily be used to drive a truck for furniture deliveries or large retailers.

“Why would you go to work for the city of Jacksonville for \$40,000 a year as a C.D.L. driver when you can go out and make \$80,000 and work for FedEx?” said Ronnie M. Burris, the business manager for the Laborers’ International Union of North America Local 630, which represents sanitation workers.

Last year, officials in Dallas tried to prepare for possible delays if workers contracted the coronavirus. Instead, delays [peaked in June](#) of this year.

Dallas, which uses temporary laborers in the back of garbage trucks, saw its worker pool decline by about 30 percent, said Cliff Gillespie, the city’s interim assistant director. Then, the city started losing truck drivers and found itself with 20 percent vacancy.

The city did what economists say is the only way to head off the shortages: It raised workers’ pay.

Contractors were bumped to \$13.20 an hour from \$12.28 an hour. Truck drivers employed by the city went to a base pay rate of \$20 or \$20.50 an hour from \$12.28 an hour, depending on their license. “So far, that has been the magic ticket,” Mr. Gillespie said.

Jacksonville, which has a \$1.7 billion operating budget, raised hourly wages in August to \$16.50 from \$11.41 for most solid waste workers and to \$19 from \$15 for most drivers.

Keith Banasiak, the chief operations officer and senior vice president of Waste Pro, one of the city’s private haulers, said it had raised wages in Jacksonville more than 20 percent from last year and offered bonuses ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

He blamed federal unemployment insurance and the child tax credit for distorting the labor market. “They found themselves able to stay home and make equal to or in some cases greater than what they were making every day,” Mr. Banasiak said.

Several recent studies have debunked the notion that unemployment payments were causing labor shortages, concluding that the extra payments [played only a small role](#) in this year’s worker shortfalls.

And Mr. Biderman said he had seen little improvement since federal unemployment benefits ended. Eliza Forsythe, a labor economist at the University of Illinois, said employers in a tight market needed to offer better wages and job quality, even if that meant that their services would grow more expensive.

“If you would like to have your garbage picked up, you’re going to have to pay the cost to get workers to do it,” she said.

That would be fine with Mr. Connors. In 38 years of living in Jacksonville’s Westside, Mr. Connors said he never had to worry much about the garbage, until now.

He has stopped putting out his bagged yard waste because, after a few days, it kills the grass. He keeps 25 to 30 bags packed into a dog pen in his backyard, waiting until he feels confident that crews will follow a reliable schedule again.

“Raise my taxes .05 percent or something,” he said. “But provide the service.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 German health officials raise concerns  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/world/germany-covid-surge.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/world/germany-covid-surge.html</a> |
| GIST     | With winter looming, German health officials and experts have raised concerns about a new surge of coronavirus cases.                             |



Cases in Germany — about 12,775 daily on average — have increased by 57 percent in the past two weeks, according to a [New York Times database](#). Deaths on average in the same period have increased by 11 percent.

The surge comes as many European countries have slowly lifted lockdowns after months of restrictions driven by Delta and other virus variants.

A national state of emergency is in place in Germany — which allows the government to unilaterally impose restrictions on states — but it is set to expire on Nov. 25. The order can be extended by a parliamentary vote, and some state officials are advocating that lawmakers do so.

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, though, noted the country's high vaccination rate and said that the emergency order could be lifted while other rules are put in place, like mask mandates and proof of vaccination. About 70 percent of the population has received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine.

Pandemic restrictions in Germany are set individually by the country's 16 states, and in general, masks are required on public transportation and in stores. Since August, visitors to Germany have had to show proof of vaccination, recovery from infection or a recent negative test for entry to indoor public spaces, like restaurants, salons and gyms. Clubs in Berlin, famed for its hedonistic nightlife, [reopened last month](#) for the first time in over a year.

Cases are [also resurging in Britain](#), where the government lifted virtually all restrictions in July, arguing that a rapid vaccination rollout had helped mitigate rates of hospitalizations and deaths. In June, [the country reported](#) as few as 2,000 cases a day, but last week, it reported an average of 47,209 new cases a day, a 30 percent increase over the average two weeks ago.

The government [has rejected calls for an immediate reintroduction](#) of some coronavirus restrictions, but it has also said that rules could be put back in place if a vaccine booster program did little to stop the spread. Health experts are cautioning that while vaccines do help prevent serious illness, they alone will not be enough to stop the upward trajectory of infection rates.

"Relying on the vaccine program to kind of take care of the problem is not going to be a solution, I'm afraid," Adam Finn, a member of a government vaccination committee, [said to the BBC on Sunday](#). "It is really time that everyone got the message that they can't just go back to normal if they want to avoid further restrictions later in the year."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Sudan plagued w/unrest since 2019   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/sudan-coup?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#sudan-has-been-plagued-with-unrest-and-an-attempted-coup-since-2019">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/sudan-coup?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#sudan-has-been-plagued-with-unrest-and-an-attempted-coup-since-2019</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>After President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan for nearly 30 years, was ousted in a coup in 2019, the country began taking tenuous steps toward democracy, but has been plagued with unrest and an attempted military takeover.</p> <p>His government was replaced by an 11-member sovereign council consisting of six civilians and five military leaders, who were given the task of preparing the country for elections after a three-year transition period.</p> <p>The council appointed Abdalla Hamdok, an economist who has held several United Nations positions, as prime minister, and his government immediately embarked on an ambitious program designed to placate pro-democracy demonstrators and rejoin the international community.</p> <p>Mr. Hamdok's government <a href="#">eased decades of strict Islamist policies</a>, scrapping an apostasy law and abolishing the use of public flogging. It also undertook a political and economic overhaul. It revived talks with rebel</p> |

groups, and [began investigations](#) into the bloody suppression of the [Darfur region](#) under Mr. al-Bashir, promising to [prosecute and possibly hand over](#) to the International Criminal Court those wanted for war crimes there.

But stubborn obstacles to progress remained, including the coronavirus pandemic, stagnant economic growth and [continued violence in Darfur](#). Mr. Hamdok survived an assassination attempt, and [concerns of a coup](#) swirled when the country entered lockdown last year to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Last month [Sudanese authorities said they had thwarted an attempted coup by loyalists of Mr. al-Bashir](#). Soldiers had tried to seize control of a state media building in the city of Omdurman, across the Nile from the capital, Khartoum, but they were stopped and arrested.

Mr. Hamdok blamed the failed coup on Bashir loyalists, both military and civilian, and described it as a near miss for the country's fragile democratic transition.

The army chief of staff had been expected to hand over leadership of the sovereign council next month to Mr. Hamdok — a largely ceremonial post, but also one that signifies full civilian control of Sudan for the first time in decades.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Sudan troops open fire on protesters</b>   |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/africa/pro-democracy-protesters-flood-the-streets-of-sudan-capital.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/africa/pro-democracy-protesters-flood-the-streets-of-sudan-capital.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Troops fired on demonstrators outside the Sudanese army headquarters, killing at least three people and injuring more than 80 according to a doctors' group, as pro-democracy protesters flooded into the streets of the capital, Khartoum, on Monday, after the military mounted a coup, detaining the prime minister, suspending the government and declaring a state of emergency.</p> <p>The casualty figures were reported by the <a href="#">Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors</a>, and other witnesses reported periodic bursts of gunfire around the city throughout the day. Nazim Sirag, a well-known pro-democracy activist, and Monim El Jak, an adviser to a cabinet minister, said they knew of at least two deaths.</p> <p>The Sudanese ministry of culture and information <a href="#">said on Facebook</a> that military forces had "shot live bullets at protesters rejecting the military coup in Khartoum."</p> <p>Video and photos posted on social media and broadcast on television stations showed demonstrators barricading roads, waving flags and banners, and burning tires, sending plumes of black smoke into the sky. They blocked streets with large stones and barbed wire as their processions grew. Masked protesters beat sticks against jerrycans and drums, brandished tree branches and held their phones to record the unfolding scenes.</p> <p>"The people are stronger," the demonstrators chanted. "Retreat is impossible," they insisted, a reference to the possibility of returning to the three-decade autocratic rule of President Omar al-Bashir, who was deposed in 2019.</p> <p>The U.S. Embassy <a href="#">said on Twitter</a> that it had received reports that armed forces were "blocking certain areas in and around Khartoum," and urged its citizens to "shelter in place."</p> <p>Schools, banks and business establishments were mostly closed, witnesses said, as the Sudanese Professionals Association, a pro-democracy coalition of trade unions and other groups, called for civil disobedience.</p> <p>Ahmed Abusin, a 27-year-old businessman in Khartoum, said security officers had surrounded the airport and key government buildings. Gunfire could be heard, he said, as demonstrators flocked to the streets.</p> |

There was no internet access and it was hard to make calls locally, he said, but no amount of restrictions would deter protesters.

“This coup has no support at all,” Mr. Abusin said in a telephone interview.

In the capital, women in colorful veils joined the protests. Some demonstrators waved the Sudanese flag, while others flashed the “V” for victory sign.

“We are challenging al-Burhan,” one woman said, referring to Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the joint civilian-military council who announced the military’s takeover and the beginning of a state of emergency.

Protesters, some whistling and shrieking, carried each other on their backs and urged a return to the civilian transition.

“We are revolutionaries. We are free,” they chorused. “We will complete the journey.”

In the city of Omdurman near Khartoum, demonstrators urged their fellow citizens to resist the military. In Port Sudan in the east, hundreds of protesters could be seen gathering before heading off into a march chanting “peaceful, peaceful.”

With the internet and phone networks severely disrupted in an apparent attempt to stifle opposition to the military’s actions, many Sudanese citizens abroad expressed concern.

“Just like millions of Sudanese in and outside of Sudan, I feel disappointed and angry,” Khalid Albaih, a political cartoonist who was about to return to Sudan, said in an interview from Doha, Qatar. He said the Sudanese people were being denied democratic freedoms.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 Covid vaccines soon for children 5 and up?  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/health/fauci-covid-vaccine-children-cdc.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Health">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/health/fauci-covid-vaccine-children-cdc.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Health</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Children ages 5 to 11 may be eligible for Covid vaccines by early next month, according to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease official. He projected a timetable for young Americans to be vaccinated with at least one dose by early November, and to be fully immunized by the holidays.</p> <p><a href="#">Food and Drug Administration regulators on Friday released their evaluation of data</a> from the Pfizer-BioNTech submission for emergency authorization of a lower-dose vaccine for young children. An advisory panel to the F.D.A. will consider Pfizer’s application for those ages 5-to-11 on Tuesday. Children 12 and up have been eligible for vaccination since May.</p> <p>Pfizer’s data “look good as to the efficacy and safety,” Dr. Fauci said on ABC’s news program, “This Week.”</p> <p>According to Pfizer and BioNTech, the children who were vaccinated as part of the trial, who received doses that were one-third the size of the adult doses, developed robust immune responses after receiving the regimen of two shots three weeks apart. The companies have said the efficacy rate of the vaccine in children reduced the risk of developing a symptomatic infection by 91 percent.</p> <p>The most common side effects in children were fatigue, headache, muscle pain and chills. According to the F.D.A., the data submitted indicated no cases of myocarditis inflammation of the heart muscle, or pericarditis, inflammation of the outer lining of the heart, rare complications that have been reported among young boys and men receiving the vaccine in other trials and in real-world applications.</p> |

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was also interviewed about the upcoming decisions on child vaccines on two Sunday news shows, and seemed to promise that decisions would not be delayed. “We know how many parents are interested in getting their children vaccinated, and we intend to work as quickly as you can,” Dr. Walensky said on “Fox News Sunday.”

The last week has produced a lot of regulatory guidance for those who can receive booster or additional doses of Covid vaccines, giving a large segment of the U.S. population access to more protection.

Both Dr. Walensky and Dr. Fauci sought to dispel confusion about booster shots and explain the option of “mixing and matching” initial vaccines and boosters.

Boosters of all three vaccines available in the United States have been authorized. Additional shots of Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines have been approved for people aged 65 and older, those with underlying health conditions and all adults whose living or working conditions place them at high risk of exposure to the virus. Anyone over the age of 18 who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least two months ago is also eligible for a booster shot.

People can receive a booster shot that is different from the initial vaccine they first received, experts said.

“If you were originally vaccinated with one product, could you and would it be appropriate and safe and effective to get boosted in the third shot for the mRNA and the second shot for J.&J. by another product?” Dr. Fauci said. “The answer is, it’s perfectly fine.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 ‘Bomb cyclone’ pummels California  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/us/bomb-cyclone-california-atmospheric-river.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/us/bomb-cyclone-california-atmospheric-river.html</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>California braced for winter storms and flash floods on Monday as meteorologists warned of a “bomb cyclone” and an “atmospheric river,” a convergence of storms that unleashed heavy rain to parts of the Bay Area, along with high winds, flash floods and the potential for heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada.</p> <p>From Marin County to the area just south of Big Sur along the Pacific Coast, flash flood watches were in effect until late Sunday night and, in some areas, early Monday morning, including parts of the San Francisco Peninsula. The system was so vast that it was expected to <a href="#">reach southern British Columbia</a> on Monday, where it was set to bring rain and strong winds, according to the National Weather Service in Seattle and Tacoma, Wash.</p> <p>The National Weather Service issued a winter weather warning on Monday with heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada through Tuesday morning.</p> <p>The threat of <a href="#">flash floods</a> prompted <a href="#">evacuation orders</a> for parts of San Mateo County, south of San Francisco. In San Francisco, emergency personnel <a href="#">ordered evacuations</a> on one block where, they said, several structures were threatened by a leaning tree.</p> <p>The convergence of storms comes at a challenging time for California, which has been besieged by wildfires and drought, the result of extreme weather brought on by climate change.</p> <p>Images of a dramatic <a href="#">landslide</a> on Highway 70 in Plumas County showed a deluge of rocks and vegetation that had barreled down from a mountainside and blocked the highway.</p> <p>The state authorities warned that areas with burn scars, where vegetation was at least partially eliminated by a fire, could see <a href="#">debris flows</a> of rushing mud, rocks or vegetation that may sound, as they phrased it, like a <a href="#">freight train</a>.</p> |

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services said on [Twitter](#) early Sunday that it was monitoring burn scars in Kern, Santa Cruz and El Dorado Counties. "Excessive rainfall" over El Dorado County's burn scar, which was caused by the [Caldor fire](#), could cause life-threatening flash floods, the [National Weather Service in Sacramento](#) said on Monday.

By early Monday, about 114,700 customers were without power in California, [according to PowerOutage.US](#).

Pacific Gas & Electric [said in a news release](#) on Sunday evening that the Bay Area along with San Mateo, Santa Clara and Marin counties had the most outage totals.

Though Oregon and Washington hadn't seen significant rainfall from the storm, [strong winds](#) were to blame [for at least two deaths near Seattle, where a tree fell on a car](#). About 48,000 customers were without power in [Washington](#) on Monday morning, PowerOutage.US reported.

A few thousand customers in Oregon were without power as well.

Parts of Washington experienced strong wind gusts, including Everett, about 25 miles north of Seattle, where gusts of up to 61 m.p.h. were recorded, according to the National Weather Service in Seattle.

"The atmospheric river is aiming a fire hose, if you will, into our area," Sean Miller, a meteorologist for the Weather Service in Monterey, Calif., the forecast office for the Bay Area, said on Sunday.

An atmospheric river is a concentrated plume of moisture that extends over the ocean, typically in the troposphere, the lowest layer of the atmosphere, Mr. Miller said. The current trough was angled toward the North Bay, he said.

In the Pacific Northwest, a bomb cyclone, a type of storm known for its falling atmospheric pressure, was expected to push the atmospheric river south, affecting areas south of San Francisco, Mr. Miller said.

"This is more typical of something we tend to see in December or January," he said, pointing out that the confluence of the two meteorological phenomena was "anomalous."

The high winds and heavy rain prompted the authorities to close the sidewalks on the [Golden Gate Bridge](#) on Sunday. In the East Bay, organizers of the [Alameda County Fair](#) closed the event on Sunday.

[Alcatraz Island](#) canceled all of its tours, and the [San Francisco](#) and [Oakland](#) zoos and San Francisco's [golf courses](#) were also shut.

Throughout the day, the San Francisco Fire Department posted updates on [Twitter](#) about flooding, felled trees, fires, and stalled vehicles on flooded roadways. On Monday the department said it rescued two adults who had become trapped in a car after driving into water along Hunters Point Expressway. One of them received medical care.

In Santa Rosa, about 55 miles north of San Francisco, roadways in parts of the city looked like streams. The city's fire department said several creeks and streets were flooding, and urged residents to avoid travel. The department also shared [video of a mudslide](#) on Twitter that had developed in a burn scar area from the [Grass Fire](#), which was active for 23 days until it was fully contained on Oct. 20.

The deluge wasn't limited to the Bay Area, as landslides and dangerous road conditions were reported in areas across Northern California.

In Placer County, Interstate 80 was closed in both directions near the Nevada state line as heavy snow fell, the California Highway patrol [said](#) on Monday morning. A winter weather warning was in effect through the night, the weather service said.

In Truckee, north of Lake Tahoe, the highway patrol [said on Twitter](#) on Sunday afternoon that rocks and water had fallen down a mountainside, blocking a road.

On Tuesday, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a proclamation extending California's [drought emergency](#) statewide and asked residents to redouble their water conservation efforts. This has been California's second driest year on record, with near-record low storage in the state's largest reservoirs, the governor's office said.

[Severe drought conditions](#), [worsened by climate change](#), continue to affect much of the Western United States and even the northern part of the Great Plains.

While droughts are not uncommon in the region, scientists say that climate change, in the form of warming temperatures and shifts in precipitation, is making the situation worse.

Several large wildfires are currently burning in California, including [the Dixie fire](#), the second-largest in state history, which has burned more than 963,000 acres, destroyed 1,300 buildings and killed one firefighter, [according to a New York Times wildfire tracker](#).

Since the start of the year, wildfires across the West have [burned more than six million acres](#).

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Hong Kong clamps down on speech  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/asia/hong-kong-security-law-speech.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/world/asia/hong-kong-security-law-speech.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>HONG KONG — A Hong Kong court on Monday convicted an activist of inciting secession for shouting pro-independence slogans at a series of protests, underlining the power of a sweeping national security law to punish speech.</p> <p>The activist, Ma Chun-man, had argued that he had not been calling for Hong Kong's independence from China, but instead had wanted to show that free speech still existed under the law, which <a href="#">Beijing imposed on Hong Kong in June 2020</a>. He will be sentenced on Nov. 11.</p> <p>Critics say Mr. Ma's conviction shows that the national security law is being used to silence political dissent.</p> <p>"The government is trying to use the N.S.L. to stamp out certain forms of speech," said Thomas E. Kellogg, executive director of the Center for Asian Law at Georgetown University. "This is a core function of the government's use of the N.S.L. over the past 15 months. As the case against Ma shows, prosecutors continue to bring serious charges against people who say things that the government doesn't like."</p> <p>In addition to security law prosecutions, the Hong Kong authorities have aggressively used older measures against thousands of people who have been arrested in the sometimes-violent protest movement that began in mid-2019. Dozens of leading activists have been convicted of illegal assembly, including seven who were sentenced this month to prison terms of up to a year for a demonstration on July 1, 2020.</p> <p>The security law, however, goes far beyond previous statutes in that it provides a powerful new tool to clamp down on dissent. Here is why it is different and what other cases are expected to be brought.</p> <p><b>What does the new ruling say?</b></p> <p>Mr. Ma, 30, is the second defendant to face trial under the security law. The first, Tong Ying-kit, was <a href="#">convicted in July of terrorism and inciting secession</a> after he crashed his motorcycle into police officers while carrying a flag with a slogan that, a court ruled, was a call for separating Hong Kong from China. Mr. Tong, a former restaurant worker, <a href="#">was sentenced to nine years in prison</a>.</p> |



Unlike the first trial, which covered both an act of speech and an act of violence, Mr. Ma was charged purely because of the words he said and displayed on signs in peaceful protests and interviews over the past year.

His chanted slogans included “Hong Kong people, establish our state” and “Hong Kong independence: The only way out.” Another of his slogans, “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times,” was the same one that Mr. Tong was convicted of using.

### **The origins of the national security law**

Beijing enacted the law at the end of June 2020 after a year of widespread protests in Hong Kong. A previous push for the city to put its own security legislation in place was dropped after a mass demonstration in 2003.

China’s central government then took up the initiative, secretly drafting the law it imposed on Hong Kong.

### **What makes it different?**

The security law introduces some elements of China’s socialist legal system to Hong Kong’s common law system. More than a year after the statute was unveiled, the system is still being worked out, but some elements are clear.

The law targets terrorism, subversion, secession and collusion with foreign forces. Its language is broad and carries many changes to Hong Kong’s legal system. It sets up an extensive infrastructure in the city, including a security committee that includes Hong Kong’s chief executive and Beijing’s top representative. China’s security forces are allowed to operate openly in Hong Kong for the first time.

Perhaps the most significant elements are the changes to the city’s judiciary.

Hong Kong’s chief executive now selects the judges who are allowed to handle security cases. The power to interpret the law has been given to the central Chinese government — meaning Hong Kong’s courts have little ability to moderate it. Complicated cases can now be tried in mainland China, although that provision has yet to be used.

The law now makes it much harder for defendants to be granted bail, and most of the 100 people who have been charged under the measure remain in jail. The vast majority of those charged have been accused of speech crimes, including saying or writing things judged to be calling for Hong Kong independence or actions by other countries, such as sanctions by the United States, deemed harmful to Hong Kong.

### **What have been its effects?**

The security law has helped curb protests in Hong Kong and has [silenced much of the outspoken dissent](#) that was once commonplace here.

Most leading activists are either in custody or in exile. Others have censored what they say publicly.

Dozens of civil society groups, including protest organizers and pro-democracy unions, have shut down because they have become the subjects of national security investigations or fear their work would make them a target.

One of the city’s largest newspapers, Apple Daily, [was forced to close](#) in June after the authorities froze its bank accounts and several top editors and executives were arrested in a national security investigation.

Film censorship has increased, and new rules expected to pass this year allowing the authorities to retroactively ban movies that had previously been approved.

Pro-government politicians have warned that [some works of art](#) at the city’s new M+ museum could violate the security law. Some books have also been scrutinized, and members of a speech therapists union

have been charged with [publishing seditious materials in children's books](#) that portrayed security forces as wolves.

### How has the rest of the world responded?

The United States and other Western governments have sharply criticized the security law, and several, like [Australia](#), halted extradition agreements with Hong Kong. The United States also imposed sanctions on several [Hong Kong](#) and [Chinese central government officials](#) over the crackdown in Hong Kong. China has retaliated with sanctions on Americans, including Wilbur Ross, the former commerce secretary.

China has shrugged off foreign criticism of the security law, which it says has brought needed stability to Hong Kong after years of unrest. Hong Kong's chief executive, Carrie Lam, [in an interview broadcast last Wednesday by the Hong Kong public broadcaster RTHK](#), said that the city's international reputation had been damaged by mischaracterizations of the law.

"Hong Kong's international reputation has suffered some damage because many foreign politicians, organizations and Western media have amplified the idea that the correct enforcement of the national security law is equivalent to suppressing human rights and freedom," she said.

"The Hong Kong government has to do more explaining in this regard."

### What trials come next?

This fall, Hong Kong courts are expected to try [Jimmy Lai, the founder of Apple Daily](#), and other top editors and executives from his company on security law charges that accuse them of colluding with foreign forces by appealing to the United States to enact sanctions against Hong Kong.

Two others who have pleaded guilty to national security charges, the activist Andy Li and the paralegal Chan Tsz-wah, are expected to testify. They have yet to be sentenced.

The largest single case under the law involves [47 politicians and activists](#) who have been charged with conspiracy to commit subversion for a campaign platform that called for blocking the Hong Kong government's agenda and forcing Mrs. Lam, to step down.

They are expected to go on trial this year. Their bail hearings in March lasted so long that some defendants were hospitalized with exhaustion, prompting criticism from legal experts about the disorderly process.

Since the protests began in mid-June 2019 the police have arrested more than 10,000 people, and more than 2,700 of them have been prosecuted. Mrs. Lam said this month that Hong Kong would build a "mega courtroom" to handle the city's shortage of court space.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Papua New Guinea health system crisis</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#covid-may-overwhelm-the-health-care-system-in-papua-new-guinea-the-red-cross-warns">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#covid-may-overwhelm-the-health-care-system-in-papua-new-guinea-the-red-cross-warns</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Papua New Guinea is facing its highest daily number of new Covid-19 cases since the pandemic began, and the surge threatens to overwhelm the country's rudimentary health system, <a href="#">the Red Cross said on Monday</a>. Data from global health organizations suggest that the crisis may be far deeper than the story told by official figures.</p> <p>Since March 2020, the country has reported 27,627 confirmed cases of the coronavirus and 335 deaths. Figures from the World Health Organization indicate that the true number of infections may be more than twice that, <a href="#">according to an Agence France-Presse report</a>.</p> <p>At least 2.6 million people, or more than a quarter of the population of nine million, have visited clinics with symptoms consistent with flu or pneumonia since the pandemic began.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Papua New Guinea's health services are poorly equipped to deal with a major outbreak. The country has only 500 doctors and fewer than 4,000 nurses, <a href="#">according to Human Rights Watch</a>. With most of the population living outside of urban centers, access to health care is limited.</p> <p>"Hospitals are full, and patients are being turned away in Port Moresby and provincial areas," said Uvenama Rova, the top Red Cross official in Papua New Guinea, in a statement. "We are deeply concerned that the risks of hospitalization and death from Covid-19 are skyrocketing due to limited health infrastructure, high rates of illness, all compounded by poor access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation facilities."</p> <p>As of Sunday, <a href="#">just 207,207 people in the country had been vaccinated</a>, because of problems with the rollout and a lack of supplies. <a href="#">Intense misinformation and vaccine hesitancy</a> have affected even the country's health staff: One survey of 130 people working in an emergency department in Port Moresby, the capital, showed 24 percent would refuse a vaccine and 37 percent were unsure, according to A.F.P.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 SKorea: 70% population vaccinated</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#south-korea-covid-restrictions">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#south-korea-covid-restrictions</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>President Moon Jae-in of South Korea announced on Monday that the country had achieved its goal of fully vaccinating 70 percent of its population of about 52 million and would be implementing a phased recovery plan next month.</p> <p>While Seoul, the capital, has been under the strictest level of social-distancing regulations since the summer, limiting social gatherings to a maximum of two at one point and barring customers from sitting in cafes, regulations were eased starting last week. Last week, South Korea also <a href="#">added five countries</a> to the list of those whose vaccinated tourists will be eligible for quarantine exemptions.</p> <p>Under the phased recovery plan that starts next Monday, restrictions <a href="#">will loosen further</a>, including allowing gatherings of up to 10 people, lifting restrictions on business operating hours, allowing spectators at some sporting events and allowing the use of showers at fitness centers. The new regulations will be observed for a four-week period, followed by a two-week evaluation term.</p> <p>While South Korea's vaccination program had a slow start compared to those in the United States and several countries in Europe and Asia, it quickly picked up its distribution to surpass the United States. The country was a week early in reaching its immunization quota on Saturday.</p> <p>On Monday, South Korea's government also said it would donate one million AstraZeneca Covid shots to Iran, in recognition of the 60-year friendship between the two countries. Earlier this month, South Korea donated <a href="#">over a million doses</a> of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Vietnam and Thailand.</p> <p>On Monday, South Korea reported <a href="#">1,190 daily new cases</a>. According to a database by <a href="#">Our World in Data</a>, the country has seen a 35 percent decrease in cases over the past two weeks. The country has faced four waves of the pandemic since February, with its latest spike starting in July and still ongoing, the worst in terms of case count.</p> <p>The government also announced a \$519 billion budget for 2022 to help recover the pandemic-induced economic fallout. The proposed budget for next year is 8.3 percent higher than this year's.</p> <p>"We will do our best to recover both financially and in our daily lives," Mr. Moon said at the National Assembly.</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 China tries to completely eradicate virus</b> |
|----------|--|

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#as-the-rest-of-the-world-abandons-zero-covid-china-holds-out">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#as-the-rest-of-the-world-abandons-zero-covid-china-holds-out</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>Australia, home to the world's longest lockdown, is scrapping quarantine requirements for vaccinated residents returning from overseas. New Zealand, famed for its commitment to a "Zero Covid" strategy, <a href="#">abandoned it this month</a>. Around the world, people are vacationing, visiting family and resuming business trips across international borders.</p> <p>Not China.</p> <p>The country where the coronavirus pandemic began is also the only one in the world still trying to completely eradicate the virus within its borders. Officials have repeatedly dismissed the idea of living with the virus, citing China's large population and their success in containment so far — even as the country has continued to record sporadic outbreaks, triggering mass testing and strict lockdowns.</p> <p>"Every locality should firmly adhere to the policy of 'Defend externally against importation, defend internally against rebound,'" Mi Feng, a spokesman for the National Health Commission, said at a news conference on Sunday. "The current control measures cannot be relaxed."</p> <p>China <a href="#">has continued to record local cases</a> — around 130 in recent days, after a spate of cases linked to domestic tourists. Parts of Beijing, Inner Mongolia and Gansu Province are under lockdown. Schools and businesses in those areas of Beijing are closed, and organizers of the Beijing Marathon, which had been planned for this weekend, <a href="#">announced on Sunday</a> that it would be indefinitely postponed.</p> <p>China's tough stance on loosening Covid restrictions is possible in part because of China's huge domestic consumer base, which has helped to keep retail spending afloat, and because of the ruling Communist Party's tight grip on power. The authorities can implement lockdowns and <a href="#">mandate multiple rounds of testing</a> with astonishing efficiency.</p> <p>In addition, many Chinese are satisfied with the government's approach. Domestic travel has surged in areas with no cases, and the country's low death rate — it has officially recorded fewer than 5,000 deaths — has <a href="#">become a source of nationalistic pride</a>, especially at a time when China's relations with many other countries are growing increasingly fraught.</p> <p>Xi Jinping, China's leader, has repeatedly pointed to China's success in containment as proof of the superiority of its governance model. When Zhang Wenhong, a prominent virologist, suggested this summer that China learn to live with the virus, he was <a href="#">attacked viciously online</a> as a lackey of foreigners.</p> <p>There is a clear incentive for China to remain closed off, at least in the short term: With Beijing set to host the Winter Olympics in February, officials <a href="#">have acknowledged that they are under pressure</a> to keep cases under control.</p> <p>Still, the question of sustainability looms. China's <a href="#">economic growth is slowing</a>. The country's diplomatic efforts may also suffer from its long isolation; <a href="#">Mr. Xi has not left China</a> or received foreign visitors since early 2020, even as other world leaders prepare to gather in Rome for a Group of 20 summit and in Glasgow for climate talks.</p> <p>Some officials have started to tentatively broach the idea of loosening restrictions, though without any timelines or firm commitments. Zhong Nanshan, one of the country's most prominent doctors, <a href="#">told a Chinese magazine</a> this month that China could begin opening up when vaccination rates had exceeded 85 percent, a goal that could potentially be reached this year.</p> <p>But, he added, there was another caveat: Other countries would also need to get cases under control.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Moderna: safe for children from 6 thru 11 |
|----------|---|

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#moderna-covid-vaccine-children">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/10/25/world/covid-vaccine-boosters#moderna-covid-vaccine-children</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>The coronavirus vaccine made by Moderna is safe and produces a powerful immune response in children 6 through 11, <a href="#">the company said on Monday</a>.</p> <p>One month after immunization was complete, the children in Moderna's trial had antibody levels that were 1.5 times higher than those seen in young adults, the company said.</p> <p>Moderna did not release the full data, nor are the results published in a peer-reviewed journal. The results were announced one day before an advisory committee of the Food and Drug Administration is scheduled to review data for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children 5 through 11.</p> <p>Moderna tested two shots of the vaccine given 28 days apart in 4,753 children. They received 50 micrograms of vaccine, half the adult dose, in each shot. (Last week, based on data showing that the half dose is still highly effective, the F.D.A. authorized a booster shot of the Moderna vaccine at this dose.)</p> <p>Moderna submitted study results for the vaccine's use for adolescents 12 through 17 in June, but the F.D.A. has not yet announced a decision for that age group.</p> <p>Some research indicates that the Moderna vaccine may increase the risk of a rare side effect called myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, in boys and young men. In July, the F.D.A. asked both Pfizer and Moderna to <a href="#">expand the size of their trials</a> in order to detect less common side effects.</p> <p>In children aged 6 through 11, most of the side effects were mild or moderate; the most common were fatigue, headache, fever and pain at the injection site, Moderna said in its statement on Monday. An independent committee will continue to review the vaccine's safety in the trial participants for 12 months after the second dose.</p> <p>Moderna is still recruiting children aged 2 through 5 and 6 months to under 2 years for trials of the vaccine in those age groups. The company has enrolled about 5,700 children in the United States and Canada in the trial.</p> <p>Moderna plans to submit the results soon to the F.D.A. and to regulatory agencies in Europe and elsewhere, the company said.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Federal advisers split over boosters</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/health/covid-boosters-cdc-fda.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/health/covid-boosters-cdc-fda.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Following a series of endorsements over the last month by scientific panels advising federal agencies, tens of millions of Americans are now eligible for booster shots of coronavirus vaccines.</p> <p>But the recommendations — even those approved unanimously — mask significant dissent and disquiet among those advisers about the need for booster shots in the United States.</p> <p>In interviews last week, several advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to the Food and Drug Administration said data show that, with the exception of adults over age 65, the vast majority of Americans are already well protected against severe illness and do not need booster shots.</p> <p>All the advisers felt that they were obligated to make difficult choices, based on sparse research, in the middle of a public health emergency. But some said they felt compelled to vote for the shots because of the way the federal agencies framed the questions that they were asked to consider.</p> <p>Other committee experts said that they wanted to avoid confusing the public further by dissenting, or that they voted according to their views of the evidence and were simply overruled.</p> |

“These are not evidence-based recommendations,” said Dr. Sarah S. Long, a pediatric infectious disease expert at Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, and a member of the [C.D.C.’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#).

Following a series of votes, the official position of the F.D.A. and C.D.C. now is that older adults, people with certain medical conditions and those whose jobs or living situations regularly expose them to the virus can opt for a booster dose of any of the three vaccines.

The C.D.C. also advised last week that people in certain high-risk groups who got one type of Covid-19 vaccine could choose a different one for their booster.

“I don’t think that we have evidence that everybody in those groups needs a booster today,” said Dr. Matthew Daley, senior investigator at Kaiser Permanente Colorado and a member of the C.D.C. advisory committee.

Dr. Long and Dr. Daley both voted in favor of booster shots at their committee’s meeting on Thursday, but with reservations over how the decision would be viewed by anxious Americans who might conclude mistakenly that the vaccines are ineffective.

When the C.D.C. committee reviewed evidence for the Pfizer-BioNTech booster in September, the advisers agreed unanimously only on extra shots for adults over age 65. Two of the 15 panelists voted against booster doses for adults over age 50 with certain medical conditions.

Approval of boosters for people aged 18 to 49 with other medical risk factors squeaked by in a vote of nine to six. And the booster recommendation for people whose occupations put them at risk did not pass.

That last category was included in the final C.D.C. recommendations only because Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the agency’s director, [overruled her advisers](#).

“You can see the hesitancy in all this,” said Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the F.D.A.’s vaccine advisory committee. “It’s because in our hearts, I think people don’t quite agree with this notion of a booster dose.”

“The door just got bigger and bigger and bigger, it got wider and wider with each step,” Dr. Offit added. “The companies got what they wanted, the administration got what they wanted.”

In interviews, the experts bemoaned the limited data on the safety and efficacy of the booster shots. The data supporting extra doses of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines was “of very low quality,” Dr. Kathleen Dooling, a C.D.C. scientist, acknowledged at the committee meeting on Thursday.

Still, some said they felt they had to vote in favor of booster shots of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines because they had already recommended boosters of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and did not want to deny other Americans.

“The problem that troubled me is that we don’t know if boosters are necessary,” said Dr. Cody Meissner, a professor of pediatrics at Tufts University School of Medicine and a member of the F.D.A. advisory committee.

But “if you’re going to do it for one group, I think fairness kind of dictates you have to do it for all the groups,” he added.

In interviews, panelists were hesitant to voice their discomfort, saying they did not want to undercut the final decisions from the committees.



“It’s hard to show some of the misgivings, because we don’t want to have mixed messaging,” said Dr. Camille Kotton, an infectious disease physician at Massachusetts General Hospital and a member of the C.D.C. committee.

But several panelists who did not wish to speak on the record said privately that the final recommendations for booster shots were inevitable as soon as President Biden promised them to all adults.

“We are in a very difficult position to do much of anything other than what everybody has already announced that we’ve done,” said Dr. Long, one of the few to publicly express her unhappiness. Some administration officials “pay lip service to science and the evidence,” she said.

Experts outside these committees also said that President Biden’s promise of boosters, in August, made it difficult for the agencies to weigh the data objectively in September and October.

“The perception is that the horse is out of the barn, and there’s not really much you can do at this point,” said Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious disease specialist at Bellevue Hospital Center who has previously advised the Biden administration.

“The fact is, you can’t have this confusing mess — it’s going to create more problems,” she added, referring to mixed signals from the White House and federal scientists.

Much of the dissent in recent hearings sprang from one central contention: that the coronavirus vaccines, like nearly all other vaccines, should be used to prevent illness severe enough to require medical attention, not milder infection.

The bulk of the evidence presented to the federal advisers demonstrated only that the original immunizations were waning in potency against infections. The vaccines seem to be holding steady against severe Covid-19 and death, except perhaps in older Americans.

“I don’t think we ever see 100 percent protection from any vaccine,” Dr. Kotton said. “The goal of getting to zero is an evanescent one and, unfortunately, not really achievable.”

“People are using it because they’re so anxious about Covid, and anxious about the state of affairs in the world,” she added, referring to booster shots.

Generally, scientists on the two committees are asked to vote yes or no on questions posed to them by the federal agencies they are advising. In some cases, committee members said they voted one way or another simply because of the way those questions were phrased.

In December, when F.D.A. advisers evaluated the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for people ages 16 and older, the evidence for its use in 16- and 17-year-olds was limited.

Dr. Archana Chatterjee and three other committee members voted against the vaccine and were criticized for it. But Dr. Chatterjee said she would have voted differently if the F.D.A. had asked about authorizing the vaccine in adults 18 and older.

“We were basically told, ‘Here’s the question, and say yes or no,’” said Dr. Chatterjee, a pediatric infectious disease expert and dean of the Chicago Medical School. “We were also not given the opportunity to explain the vote.”

In subsequent meetings, the F.D.A. allowed the science advisers to request changes to the question and to explain their votes. But they are still restricted to voting only on the data included in a company’s application.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>At a recent meeting, for example, some F.D.A. advisers said they wanted to recommend that Johnson &amp; Johnson recipients have the option to choose any vaccine for their booster. But the F.D.A. only asked the panel to vote on a booster of the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine.</p> <p>One of the panelists, Dr. Stanley Perlman, said he voted yes because it was clear that Johnson &amp; Johnson recipients would benefit from a second shot. But the unanimous vote signaled far more confidence in the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine as a booster than he felt, said Dr. Perlman, an immunologist and coronavirus expert at the University of Iowa.</p> <p>Dr. Perlman said he was opposed to boosters for younger people at first, but voted in favor for other reasons. In the case of health care workers, for example, “I didn’t want to have any nurses or doctors staying home because they had asymptomatic” infections, he said.</p> <p>Several experts said they have tried to be clear about the limitations of the data and the rationale behind their decisions. But communicating in the midst of a pandemic has proved to be tricky.</p> <p>“Through no intentional fault of anyone, the messaging has been challenging — and then there’s a lot of misinformation, which is tragic,” Dr. Kotton said.</p> <p>In approving the boosters, however reluctantly, federal agencies and their advisers may have given Americans the impression that two doses were not protective enough, some experts said.</p> <p>“They continue inadvertently to damn the vaccine, when what they should say is, ‘It is remarkable,’” said Dr. Offit. “It’s a miracle vaccine.”</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Russia reports record number daily cases</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-russia-pandemics-vladimir-putin-3416d95057d88f83fc31b0362be9d960">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-business-russia-pandemics-vladimir-putin-3416d95057d88f83fc31b0362be9d960</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>MOSCOW (AP) — Russia reported another daily record of confirmed coronavirus cases Monday as a surge in infections has prompted the Kremlin to tell most people to stay away from work starting later this week.</p> <p>The Russian government’s coronavirus task force tallied 37,930 new confirmed cases in 24 hours, the highest number since the start of the pandemic. The task force also reported 1,069 more COVID-19 deaths in the same period, slightly fewer than a record of 1,075 reached over the weekend.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russians not to go to work between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7, when the country will observe an extended holiday. During that time, most state organizations and private businesses, except for those operating key infrastructure and a few others, are to halt work.</p> <p>In some of Russia’s 85 regions where the situation is particularly grave, Putin said the nonworking period could begin earlier and be extended beyond Nov. 7. Six of them — Kursk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novgorod, Perm, Samara and Voronezh — started the off-work period Monday.</p> <p>Officials in Moscow ordered it to begin Thursday, with gyms, most entertainment venues and most stores closed for 11 days along with kindergartens and schools. Restaurants and cafes will only be open for takeout or delivery orders during that period. Food stores and pharmacies can stay open.</p> <p>Access to museums, theaters, concert halls and other venues will be limited to those holding digital codes on their smartphones to prove vaccination or past illness, a practice that will remain in place after Nov. 7.</p> <p>Putin has also told local officials to order unvaccinated people older than 60 to stay home and close nightclubs and other entertainment venues.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Russian authorities hope the idle time will help limit the spread of the virus by keeping people out of offices and off public transportation, where mask mandates have been loosely enforced.</p> <p>Overall, Russia has registered over 8.2 million confirmed virus cases and 231,669 deaths, by far the highest death toll in Europe and the fifth-highest in the world after the United States, Brazil, India and Mexico.</p> <p>The government has blamed the latest spike in infections and deaths on low vaccination rates and lax public attitudes toward taking precautions. Only about 45 million Russians — roughly a third of the country's nearly 146 million people — are fully vaccinated.</p> <p>Russia was the first country in the world to authorize a coronavirus vaccine, launching Sputnik V in August 2020, and has plentiful supplies. But uptake has been slow, blamed in part on conflicting signals from authorities.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 China Delta outbreak ahead of Olympics</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3153551/chinas-covid-19-delta-outbreak-prompts-postponement-beijing">https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3153551/chinas-covid-19-delta-outbreak-prompts-postponement-beijing</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Rising <a href="#">Covid-19</a> infections in China have prompted organisers to postpone the weekend's Beijing marathon, as the country seeks to return to zero cases ahead of the <a href="#">Winter Olympics</a>.</p> <p>China reported 39 new domestic infections on Monday, in an outbreak spread by a travelling group of tourists in the latest test of the country's zero-tolerance approach with just over 100 days until the start of the Games.</p> <p>Organisers of the Beijing marathon said the run would be postponed until further notice "to prevent the risk of the epidemic spreading (and) effectively protect the health and safety of the majority of runners, staff and residents." Some 30,000 people were expected to take part in the race on October 31.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Wuhan marathon</a>, which was due to have taken place on Sunday, was also cancelled at short notice amid worries over the coronavirus resurgence.</p> <p>Authorities have been racing to contain virus infections via mass testing of residents and targeted lockdowns, as the outbreak spreads to 11 provinces. Health officials have said the spate of domestic infections involve a strain of the Delta variant from abroad.</p> <p>The Wuhan event was expected to have 26,000 participants taking part in races including full and half marathons, in the city where the new coronavirus was first identified towards the end of 2019.</p> <p>With the latest clusters linked to tourism across the country, authorities on Sunday announced the suspension of cross-provincial tour groups in five areas where cases have been detected, including Beijing.</p> <p>Some cities, including Gansu's provincial capital of Lanzhou, and parts of Inner Mongolia have suspended bus and taxi services and closed tourism sites.</p> <p>Beijing will on Wednesday mark 100 days before the Winter Olympics, which are set to open on February 4.</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 China outbreaks; vaccinating young kids</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3153601/coronavirus-china-start-vaccinating-children-young-3-amid-new">https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3153601/coronavirus-china-start-vaccinating-children-young-3-amid-new</a> |

Children as young as three will start receiving [Covid-19 vaccines in China](#), where 76 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated and authorities are maintaining a zero-tolerance policy towards [outbreaks](#).

Local city and provincial-level governments in at least five provinces issued notices in recent days announcing that children aged from three to 11 will be required to get vaccinated.

The expansion of the vaccination campaign comes as parts of China [take new clampdown measures](#) to try to stamp out small outbreaks. Gansu, a northwestern province heavily dependent on tourism, closed all tourist sites on Monday after finding new Covid-19 cases. Residents in parts of Inner Mongolia have been ordered to stay indoors due to an outbreak there.

The National Health Commission reported 35 new cases of local transmission had been detected over the past 24 hours, four of them in Gansu. Another 19 cases were found in the Inner Mongolia region, with others scattered around the country.

China has employed lockdowns, quarantines and compulsory testing for the virus throughout the pandemic and has largely stamped out cases of local infection while fully vaccinating 1.07 billion people in its population of 1.4 billion.

In particular, the government is concerned about the spread of the more contagious Delta variant by travellers and about having a largely vaccinated public ahead of the [Beijing Winter Olympics](#) in February. Overseas spectators have already been banned from the Games, and participants will have to stay in a bubble separating them from people outside.

China's most widely used vaccines, from Sinopharm and Sinovac, have shown efficacy in preventing severe disease and transmission of the virus, based on public data. But the protection they offer against the Delta variant has not been answered definitively, although officials say they remain protective.

Hubei, Fujian and Hainan provinces all issued notices on the new vaccination requirements, while individual cities in Zhejiang and Hunan have also issued similar announcements.

China in June had approved two vaccines – Sinopharm's from the Beijing Institute of Biological Products and Sinovac – for children aged three to 17, but it has only been vaccinating those aged 12 and older. In August, regulators approved another, Sinopharm's from the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products.

After the vaccines received domestic approval for children in China, foreign governments began giving the shots to children in their own countries. Cambodia uses both Sinovac and Sinopharm's shots in children aged six to 11.

Regulators in Chile approved Sinovac for children as young as six. In Argentina, regulators approved the Sinopharm vaccine for children as young as three.

Many developing countries left out of the race to get shots from Western pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer and Moderna bought Chinese vaccines. China had shipped more than 1.2 billion doses as of September, according to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Even with widespread domestic and global use, not every parent is reassured about the vaccine, citing less publicly available data on the shots.

Wang Lu, who lives in the southern city of Fuzhou in Fujian province, said she was not particularly rushing to get her three-year-old son vaccinated. "I'm just not very clear on the vaccine's safety profile, so I don't really want to get him vaccinated, at the very least, I don't want to be the first," Wang said.

Sinovac started an efficacy trial with 14,000 child participants across multiple countries in September. Its approval in China was based on smaller phase 1 and phase 2 trials. Sinopharm's Beijing shot was also

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>approved based on smaller phase 1 and phase 2 trials. These were published later in peer-reviewed journals.</p> <p>Other parents said they were not concerned, given that many other people had already gotten the shot. Wu Cong, a mother of a seven-year old, said her daughter's school in Shanghai had not yet notified them of any vaccinations.</p> <p>"I think this isn't too different from the flu vaccine, there's already been so many people vaccinated, so I don't have too many worries," Wu said.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Sudan military seizes power; arrests PM</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-sudan-arrests-omar-al-bashir-c8d027c0a9e250fcb5a595bdc987d282">https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-sudan-arrests-omar-al-bashir-c8d027c0a9e250fcb5a595bdc987d282</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>CAIRO (AP) — Sudan's military seized power Monday, dissolving the transitional government hours after troops arrested the prime minister. Thousands of people flooded into the streets to protest the coup that threatens the country's shaky progress toward democracy.</p> <p>The takeover comes more than two years after protesters forced the ouster of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and just weeks before the military was supposed to hand the leadership of the council that runs the country over to civilians.</p> <p>After the early morning arrests of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and other senior officials, thousands poured into the streets of the capital, Khartoum, and its twin city of Omdurman. They blocked streets and set fire to tires as security forces used tear gas to disperse them.</p> <p>As plumes of smoke filled the air, protesters could be heard chanting, "The people are stronger, stronger" and "Retreat is not an option!" Videos on social media showed large crowds crossing bridges over the Nile to the center of the capital, while the U.S. embassy warned troops were blocking off parts of the city.</p> <p>At least 12 protesters were wounded in demonstrations, according to the Sudanese Doctors Committee, which did not give details.</p> <p>In the afternoon, the head of the military, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, announced on national TV that he was dissolving the government and the Sovereign Council, a joint military and civilian body created soon after al-Bashir's ouster to run the country.</p> <p>Burhan said quarrels among political factions prompted the military to intervene. Tensions have been rising for weeks over the course and the pace of the transition to democracy in Sudan, a nation in Africa linked by language and culture to the Arab world.</p> <p>The general declared a state of emergency and said the military will appoint a technocratic government to lead the country to elections, set for July 2023. But he made clear the military will remain in charge.</p> <p>"The Armed Forces will continue completing the democratic transition until the handover of the country's leadership to a civilian, elected government," he said. He added that the country's constitution would be rewritten and a legislative body would be formed with the participation of "young men and women who made this revolution."</p> <p>The Information Ministry, still loyal to the dissolved government, called his speech an "announcement of a seizure of power by military coup."</p> <p>EU foreign affairs chief Joseph Borrell tweeted that he was following events with the "utmost concern." The U.N. political mission to Sudan called the detentions of government officials "unacceptable."</p> |

Jeffrey Feltman, the U.S. special envoy to the Horn of Africa, said Washington was “deeply alarmed” by Monday’s developments.

Since al-Bashir, who remains in prison, was forced from power, Sudan has worked to slowly rid itself the international pariah status it held under the autocrat. The country was removed from the United States’ state supporter of terror list in 2020, opening the door for badly needed foreign loans and investment. But Sudan’s economy has struggled with the shock of a number economic reforms called for by international lending institutions.

In recent weeks, there have been concerns that the military might be planning a take over, and in fact there was a failed coup attempt in September. Tensions only rose from there, as the country fractured along old lines, with more conservative Islamists who want a military government pitted against those who toppled al-Bashir in protests. In recent days, both camps have taken to the street in demonstrations.

Amid the standoff, the generals have called repeatedly for dissolving Hamdok’s transitional government — and Burhan, who leads the ruling Sovereign Council, said frequently that the military would only hand over power to an elected government, an indication that the generals might not stick to the plan to hand leadership of the body to a civilian sometime in November. The council is the ultimate decision maker, though the Hamdok’s government is tasked with running Sudan’s day-to-day affairs.

As part of efforts to resolve the crisis, Feltman met with Sudanese officials over the weekend and tried unsuccessfully during his visit to get the generals to stick to the agreed plan, a senior military official said.

The arrests began a few hours later, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief media.

In recent weeks, the military has been emboldened in its dispute with civilian leaders by the support of tribal protesters, who blocked the country’s main Red Sea port for weeks. The most two senior military officials, Burhan and his deputy Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, also have close ties with Egypt and the wealthy Gulf nations of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The first reports of a possible military takeover emerged before dawn, and the Information Ministry later confirmed them hours later, saying Hamdok and several senior government figures had been arrested and their whereabouts were unknown. Internet access was widely disrupted and the country’s state news channel played patriotic traditional music.

Hamdok’s office denounced the detentions on Facebook as a “complete coup.” It said his wife was also arrested.

Sudan has suffered other coups since it gained its independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956. Al-Bashir came to power in 1989 in one such takeover, which removed the country’s last elected government.

Among those detained Monday were senior government figures and political leaders, including the information and industry ministers, a media adviser to Hamdok and the governor of the state that includes the capital, according to the senior military official and another official. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to share the information with the media.

After news of the arrests spread, the country’s main pro-democracy group and two political parties issued appeals to the Sudanese to take to the streets.

The Communist Party called on workers to protest what it described as a “full military coup” orchestrated by Burhan.

The African Union has called for the release of all Sudanese political leaders including Hamdok. “Dialogue and consensus is the only relevant path to save the country and its democratic transition,” said Moussa Faki, the head of the AU commission.



## Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| HEADLINE                      | 10/26 Dutch media: crackdown darknet; arrests   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/more-than-150-arrested-global-crackdown-darknet-traders-dutch-media-2021-10-26/">https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/more-than-150-arrested-global-crackdown-darknet-traders-dutch-media-2021-10-26/</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>THE HAGUE, Oct 26 (Reuters) - At least 150 people have been arrested by European and U.S. authorities after a joint crackdown on traders of drugs, weapons and other illicit goods on darknet e-commerce sites, Dutch media reported Tuesday citing police agency Europol.</p> <p>Cash and cryptocurrency worth 26.7 million euros (\$31 million) and 234 kilograms of drugs were also seized, according to Dutch broadcaster KRO-NRCV.</p> <p>"This operation proves that we can reach (criminals on the dark web) even if they think they are hiding somewhere, they cannot be sure we won't be there at one moment to knock on their door", Europol's deputy executive director of operations, Jean-Philippe Lecouffe told the broadcaster.</p> <p>Europol would not comment on the report, but referred to a press conference set for 10AM local time (1400 GMT) in Washington with the Department of Justice.</p> <p>According to the Dutch media 65 U.S. nationals were arrested, along with 47 Germans, 24 Brits and a handful of Dutch, French, Swiss and Bulgarian nationals.</p> <p>The operation focused on sellers and buyers on the darknet rather than the people running the sites as in earlier crackdowns.</p> <p>Darknet markets are e-commerce sites designed to lie beyond the reach of regular search engines. They are popular with criminals, as buyers and sellers are largely untraceable.</p> <p>In January this year, Europol announced it had taken down an online marketplace called "DarkMarket" that sold illegal drugs in an operation led by German law enforcement agencies.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/26 Cyberattack strikes Iran gas stations?  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-iran-dubai-united-arab-emirates-0342c10733bc89379e00d99152fe7a1f">https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-iran-dubai-united-arab-emirates-0342c10733bc89379e00d99152fe7a1f</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Gas stations across Iran on Tuesday suffered through a widespread outage of a government system managing fuel subsidies, stopping sales in an incident that one semiofficial news agency briefly referred to as a cyberattack.</p> <p>An Iranian state television account online shared images of long lines of cars waiting to fill up in Tehran. An Associated Press journalist also saw lines of cars at a Tehran gas station, with the pumps off and the station closed.</p> <p>State TV did not explain what the issue was, but said Oil Ministry officials were holding an “emergency meeting” to solve the technical problem.</p> <p>The semiofficial ISNA news agency, which called the incident a cyberattack, said it saw those trying to buy fuel with a government-issued card through the machines instead receive a message reading “cyberattack 64411.” Most Iranians rely on those subsidies to fuel their vehicles, particularly amid <a href="#">the country's economic problems</a>.</p> |

While ISNA didn't acknowledge the number's significance, that number is associated to a hotline run through the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that handles questions about Islamic law. ISNA later removed its reports.

Farsi-language satellite channels abroad published videos apparently shot by drivers in Isfahan, a major Iranian city, showing electronic billboards there reading: "Khamenei! Where is our gas?" Another said: "Free gas in Jamaran gas station," a reference to the home of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the outage. However, the use of the number "64411" mirrored [an attack in July targeting Iran's railroad system that also saw the number displayed](#). Israeli cybersecurity firm Check Point later attributed the train attack to a group of hackers that called themselves Indra, after the Hindu god of war.

Indra previously targeted firms in Syria, where President Bashar Assad has held onto power through Iran's intervention in his country's grinding war.

Iran has faced a series of cyberattacks, including one that [leaked video of abuses its notorious Evin prison in August](#).

The country disconnected much of its government infrastructure from the internet after the Stuxnet computer virus — widely believed to be a joint U.S.-Israeli creation — disrupted thousands of Iranian centrifuges in the country's nuclear sites in the late 2000s.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 FBI internal guide: obtaining telecom data</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7vqkv/how-fbi-gets-phone-data-att-tmobile-verizon">https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7vqkv/how-fbi-gets-phone-data-att-tmobile-verizon</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>A newly obtained document written by the FBI lays out in unusually granular detail how it and other law enforcement agencies can obtain location information of phones from telecommunication companies.</p> <p>Much of the information reiterates what we already knew about law enforcement access to telecommunications data—how officials can request location data from a telecom with a warrant or use court orders to obtain other information on a phone user, for example. But the document does provide insights on what exactly each carrier collects, a more recent run-down of how long each telecom retains certain types of data for, and images of the tool the FBI makes available to law enforcement agencies across the country to analyze cell phone tower data.</p> <p>Ryan Shapiro, executive director of <a href="#">nonprofit organization Property of the People</a>, shared the document with Motherboard after obtaining it through a public record act request. Property of the People focuses on obtaining and publishing government records.</p> <p>The document, <a href="#">a 139 page slide presentation dated 2019</a>, is written by the FBI's Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST).</p> <p>CAST supports the FBI as well as state, local, and tribal law enforcement investigations through the analysis of call data and tower information, the presentation adds. That can include obtaining the data from telecommunications companies in the first place; analyzing tower dumps that can show which phones were in an approximate location at a given time; providing expert witness testimony; and performing drive tests to verify the actual coverage of a cell tower.</p> <p>"When necessary, CAST will utilize industry standard survey gear drive test equipment to determine the true geographical coverage breadth of a cell site sector," the presentation reads. The presentation highlights the legal process required to obtain information from a telecommunications company, such as a court order or search warrant.</p> |

The LinkedIn profile of one CAST member Motherboard found says they have a “special emphasis in historical cell site analysis which is typically used for locating phones (and the individuals attached to those phones) for cases such as kidnappings, homicides, missing persons, and robberies.”

CAST provides its own cell phone data visualization tool to law enforcement officials around the country called CASTViz for free.

“CASTViz has the ability to quickly plot call detail records and tower data for lead generation and investigative purposes,” the presentation reads. The document includes images of and instructions for the CASTViz software itself.

Nate Wessler, deputy project director of the Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said in a phone call that “I’ve never seen a visualization of it” after viewing the document. He added that the document raises questions around what sort of assumptions are built into this tool, and what errors this software might make. (The presentation adds that maps and analysis created by CASTViz should not be taken to court without being validated for accuracy, and that testimony should only be through a qualified expert).

The document also explains how data requests from Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) such as Boost Mobile are handled, explains how to obtain location data from what the FBI describes as “burner phones,” and how to obtain information from OnStar, General Motors’ in-vehicle system. The document also provides the cost of some of this data for law enforcement to request.

The presentation provides more recent figures on how long telecoms retain data for. AT&T holds onto data such as call records, cell site, and tower dumps for 7 years. T-Mobile holds similar information for 2 years, and Verizon holds it for 1 year.

“There is no conceivable business reason they need that much,” Wessler said, referring to AT&T’s longer retention periods than other telecoms.

The slide also shows that AT&T retains “cloud storage internet/web browsing” data for 1 year. When asked what this detail entails exactly, such as websites visited by customers on the AT&T network, AT&T spokesperson Margaret Boles said in an email that “Like all companies, we are required by law to comply with mandatory legal demands, such as warrants based on probable cause. Our responses comply with the law.” The document also mentions that law enforcement can request records related to wearable devices from AT&T.

Another section that provides an overview of the different engineering and location datasets held by telecoms and potentially available to law enforcement agencies tells officials to use some AT&T data “cautiously.”

“AT&T does not validate results,” the presentation reads. AT&T did not respond to a request for comment on this point.

“It’s good that there’s a disclaimer. At the same time, concerning that they’re advising law enforcement officers—state and local police—that they can ask for this stuff,” Wessler said on the AT&T data.

That section also mentioned that Verizon has a “new” location tool that law enforcement agencies can use.

Rich Young, a Verizon spokesperson, told Motherboard in an email that “This is a tool that our security team uses in response to lawful warrants and emergency requests. For example, this tool would be used in response to cases involving armed fugitives or missing children. As a common industry practice, the tool uses network-based cell site location information. All other major providers use a similar approach.”

The FBI did not respond to a request for comment.

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 US tightens cyber export controls   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20211025-u-s-tightens-export-controls-on-items-used-in-surveillance-of-private-citizens-other-malicious-cyber-activities">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20211025-u-s-tightens-export-controls-on-items-used-in-surveillance-of-private-citizens-other-malicious-cyber-activities</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The <a href="#">Commerce Department</a>'s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) has released an interim final <a href="#">rule</a>, establishing controls on the export, reexport, or transfer (in-country) of certain items that can be used for malicious cyber activities. The rule also creates a new License Exception Authorized Cybersecurity Exports (ACE) and requests public comments on the projected impact of the proposed controls on U.S. industry and the cybersecurity community.</p> <p>License Exception ACE would allow the export, reexport and transfer (in-country) of 'cybersecurity items' to most destinations, while retaining a license requirement for exports to countries of national security or weapons of mass destruction concern. In addition, countries subject to a U.S. arms embargo will require a license.</p> <p>While allowing certain exclusions, restricted end users targeted by this interim final rule would include a 'government end user,' as defined in § 740.22 of the EAR, of countries of concern for national security reasons or those subject to an arms embargo. Furthermore, the License Exception ACE would impose an end-use restriction in circumstances where the exporter, re-exporter, or transferor knows or has reason to know at the time of export, reexport, or transfer (in-country), including a deemed export or reexport, that the 'cybersecurity item' will be used to affect the confidentiality, integrity or availability of information or information systems, without authorization by the owner, operator or administrator of the information system (including the information and processes within such systems).</p> <p>The Commerce Department note that the U.S. government opposes the misuse of technology to abuse human rights or conduct other malicious cyber activities, and these new rules will help ensure that U.S. companies are not fueling authoritarian practices. U.S. exporters are likewise encouraged to consult the State Department's Guidance on Implementing the "Guiding Principles" for Transactions Linked to Foreign Government End Users for Products or Services with Surveillance Capabilities to minimize the risk that their products or services are misused by governments to violate or abuse human rights.</p> <p>The rule is consistent with the result of BIS's negotiations in the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) multilateral export control regime and with a review of comments from Congress, the private sector, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders on previously proposed BIS rulemaking in this area. Comments to the rule must be received in no later than 45 days from today, and the rule will become effective 90 days from today.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo released the following statement: "The United States is committed to working with our multilateral partners to deter the spread of certain technologies that can be used for malicious activities that threaten cybersecurity and human rights. The Commerce Department's interim final rule imposing export controls on certain cybersecurity items is an appropriately tailored approach that protects America's national security against malicious cyber actors while ensuring legitimate cybersecurity activities."</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Countries ranked by online risks   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/countries-ranked-online-risks/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/countries-ranked-online-risks/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>The considerable variation in risks faced by internet users worldwide has been laid bare by a new <a href="#">study</a> by anti-fraud vendor <a href="#">SEON</a>.</p> <p>Combining data from five cybersecurity indices and indicators, the researchers ranked 100 countries across the world according to their respective cyber-risks. These indicators included data from the <a href="#">National Cyber Security Index</a> (NCSI) and the <a href="#">Global Cybersecurity Index 2020</a>, which rank countries according to their cybersecurity measures.</p> |

The researchers also analyzed the [Basel AML Index: 9th Edition](#), which focuses on the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing in different countries, and the [Cybersecurity Exposure Index](#) (CEI) 2020, which measures how at-risk internet users are in each country. Finally, they examined the strength of anti-cybercrime legislation in each country via the [Global Cyber Strategies Index](#).

Taken together, Denmark was rated the safest nation to spend time online, achieving a cyber-safety score of 8.91. The researchers noted Denmark scored especially well on the Cybersecurity Exposure Index.

Germany (8.76) was second place, which had a high Global Cybersecurity Index score and comprehensive laws and regulations. In third was the US (8.73), followed by Norway (8.46), the UK (8.44), Canada (8.35), Sweden (8.22), Australia (8.16), Japan (8.09) and Netherlands (8.00).

Conversely, the country that ranked lowest for internet safety was Myanmar (2.22), scoring poorly across the indices. In particular, it had hardly cybersecurity legislation in place to help disrupt the activities of threat actors. Myanmar was followed by Cambodia (2.67), Honduras (3.13), Bolivia (3.21) and Mongolia (3.25).

SEON also highlighted the most common types of cybercrime in the US in 2020, taken from the US Internet Crime Complaints Center. The three highest were phishing and pharming (32.96%), non-payment/non-delivery (14.87%) and extortion (10.48%).

Additionally, the study demonstrated the growing prevalence of data breaches. In 2005, there were 157 breaches, which compares to 1001 in 2020, a rise of 537.58%.

SEON stated: “While the combination of public and private sector efforts to tame the digital Wild West has made it more difficult for online fraudsters in some respects, cybercrime remains a persistent threat for internet users.”

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 GCHQ: ransomware doubled in a year</b>   |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gchq-boss-ransomware-doubled-year/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gchq-boss-ransomware-doubled-year/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The volume of ransomware attacks on UK organizations has doubled over the past year, a British spy chief has warned.</p> <p>Director of GCHQ, Jeremy Fleming, reportedly made the remarks at the Cipher Brief annual threat conference yesterday.</p> <p>“I think that the reason [ransomware] is proliferating — we’ve seen twice as many attacks this year as last year in the UK — is because it works. It just pays. Criminals are making very good money from it and are often feeling that that’s largely uncontested,” he said, according to <a href="#">The Guardian</a>.</p> <p>“In the shorter term we’ve got to sort out ransomware, and that is no mean feat in itself. We have to be clear on the red lines and behaviors that we want to see, we’ve got to go after those links between criminal actors and state actors.”</p> <p>Fleming’s words echo those of his counterpart in GCHQ spin-off the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Lindy Cameron.</p> <p>She has warned UK organizations that ransomware represents their <a href="#">biggest immediate threat</a> on multiple occasions.</p> <p>The country has not suffered a major incident on the scale of the <a href="#">Colonial Pipeline</a> or <a href="#">Kaseya</a> ransomware breaches, which both had large-scale repercussions across society, since WannaCry struck in 2017.</p> |

However, there have been countless smaller victims, with those in the education sector and local government particularly severely hit.

Tony Pepper, CEO of [Egress](#), argued that organizations of all sizes could become victims of ransomware.

“With ransomware incidents against UK businesses doubling in the space of a year, now is the time for organizations to ramp up their defenses,” he added.

“Over 90% of malware, including ransomware, is delivered via email — so it’s vital that organizations are aware of the threat posed by phishing in facilitating these attacks.”

Security vendor [Emsisoft claims to have found](#) vulnerabilities in around a dozen ransomware variants, enabling the firm to help victims recover their files without paying their attackers. However, this will first require notifying the authorities, which some organizations are still reluctant to do.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Hackers exploit billing software zero-day</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-used-billing-software-zero-day-to-deploy-ransomware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-used-billing-software-zero-day-to-deploy-ransomware/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>An unknown ransomware group is exploiting a critical SQL injection bug found in the BillQuick Web Suite time and billing solution to deploy ransomware on their targets' networks in ongoing attacks.</p> <p>BQE Software, the company behind BillQuick, claims to have a 400,000 strong user base worldwide.</p> <p>The vulnerability, tracked as <a href="#">CVE-2021-42258</a>, can be triggered extremely easily via login requests with invalid characters (a single quote) in the username field, according to security researchers with the Huntress ThreatOps team.</p> <p>This actively exploited vulnerability was patched on <a href="#">October 7</a> after Huntress Labs notified BQE Software of the bug.</p> <p>However, the researchers also found eight other BillQuick zero-day vulnerabilities (i.e., <a href="#">CVE-2021-42344</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42345</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42346</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42571</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42572</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42573</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42741</a>, <a href="#">CVE-2021-42742</a>) also usable for initial access/code execution and ripe for abuse since they're still waiting for a patch.</p> <p><b>Unpatched BillQuick server used to hack engineering company</b></p> <p>"Our team was able to successfully recreate this SQL injection-based attack and can confirm that hackers can use this to access customers' BillQuick data and run malicious commands on their on-premises Windows servers," <a href="#">Huntress Labs said</a>.</p> <p>"We have been in close contact with the BQE team to notify them of this vulnerability, assess the code changes implemented in WebSuite 2021 version 22.0.9.1 and work to address multiple security concerns we raised over their BillQuick and Core offerings (more to come on these when patches are available)."</p> <p>According to the researchers, since the attacks have begun, a U.S. engineering company already had its systems encrypted after a vulnerable BillQuick server was hacked and used as the initial point of access to its network.</p> <p>"The actor we observed did not align with any known/large threat actor of which we are aware. It's my personal opinion this was a smaller actor and/or group based on their behavior during exploitation and post-exploitation," Huntress Labs security researcher Caleb Stewart told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"However, based on the issues we've identified/disclosed, I would expect further exploitation by others moving forward is likely. We observed the activity over Columbus Day weekend (08-10 October 2021)."</p> |



### Active since at least May 2020

The ransomware gang behind these attacks is unknown, and its operators haven't dropped ransom notes on encrypted systems to make it easier to identify them or ask their victims to pay ransom in exchange for decryptors.

Also, it's not clear if the ransomware is used as a decoy to cover up other malicious activity, such as data theft, or if the victims are expected to know to email the threat actor from the extension appended to encrypted files.

BleepingComputer found that the ransomware deployed by this group has been in use since at least May 2020 and it heavily borrows code from other AutoIT-based ransomware families.

Once deployed on target systems, it will add the *pusheken91@bk.ru* extension to all encrypted files but, as mentioned above, BleepingComputer has not seen it drop a ransom note during any known attacks.

The attackers are likely using this approach because the appended extension itself hints at what email the victims have to use to ask for details on how to recover their data.

In August, [the FBI and CISA warned organizations](#) not to let down their defenses against ransomware attacks during weekends or holidays in a joint cybersecurity advisory.

The two federal government agencies said they "observed an increase in highly impactful ransomware attacks occurring on holidays and weekends—when offices are normally closed—in the United States, as recently as the Fourth of July holiday in 2021."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Subscription fraud targets Android users</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/millions-of-android-users-targeted-in-subscription-fraud-campaign/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/millions-of-android-users-targeted-in-subscription-fraud-campaign/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>A massive fraud campaign utilizing 151 Android apps with 10.5 million downloads was used to subscribe users to premium subscription services without their knowledge.</p> <p>Researchers at Avast discovered the campaign, naming it 'UltimaSMS,' and reported 80 associated apps that they found on the Google Play Store.</p> <p>While Google quickly removed the apps, the fraudsters likely amassed millions of dollars in fraudulent subscription charges.</p> <p><b>It starts with a phone number</b></p> <p>The threat actors conducted the UltimateSMS campaign through 151 Android apps that pretended to be discount apps, games, custom keyboards, QR code scanners, video and photo editors, spam call blockers, camera filters, and more.</p> <p>When launching one of these apps for the first time, use data from the smartphone, like the location and IMEI, to change its language to match the country.</p> <p>The app would then prompt the user to enter their mobile phone number and email address to access the program's features.</p> <p>Having the phone number and the required permissions, the app then subscribes the victim to a \$40 per month SMS service from which the scammers get a cut as an affiliate partner.</p> <p><a href="#">Avast's analysis</a> reveals that the authors of these apps have implemented a system that charges the victim the maximum possible amount based on their location.</p> |

Although most of these apps don't offer the advertised functionality, and despite the numerous bad reviews they had on the Play Store, their creators are still finding success through the sheer volume of submissions.

By using such a large number of apps for the 'UltimaSMS' campaign, the scammers maintained a constant influx of victims and preserved their presence on the Play Store despite the constant reporting and take-down action by Google.

According to Sensor Tower, the most affected countries are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the UAE, all counting over a million victimized users. In the U.S., the number of infected devices is 170,000.

#### **What should UltimateSMS victims do?**

While uninstalling the app will prevent new subscriptions from being made, it will not prevent the existing subscription from being charged again. To avoid future charges, you need to contact your carrier and ask for a cancellation of all SMS subscriptions.

You can review [this list on GitHub](#) for a complete list of the apps you should remove immediately from your device.

To avoid falling victim to scams of this kind, ask your carrier to disable the premium SMS option for your account and avoid entering your phone number on apps that would not need this information.

It is also strongly advised that you read reviews before installing an app, and if there is repeated negative feedback, avoid the app altogether.

[Return to Top](#)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 Ransomware hits industrial goods, services</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/industrial-goods-services-tops-ransomware-targets-in-2021">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/industrial-goods-services-tops-ransomware-targets-in-2021</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>The industrial goods and services sector has been the most heavily targeted with ransomware attacks so far this year, according to new data that put the industry in the top spot for the third quarter of 2021.</p> <p>Ransomware operators targeted a more diverse range of sectors in the third quarter, report the Digital Shadows researchers who shared the data. While industrial goods and services was still the most targeted, the number of attacks dropped 42% compared to the second quarter of 2021. Attacks against healthcare also saw a notable decrease (31.8%); attacks against the tech sector went up 29.8%.</p> <p>North America has a common target for ransomware activity "likely because threat actors have been successful in receiving large ransom payments from the region in previous campaigns," the researchers wrote in a blog post. The US continued to be the most targeted, followed by Canada. Of all the ransomware victims name to data leak sites in the third quarter, 47% were organizations based in either country.</p> <p>Looking ahead, researchers point to issues related to data-leak sites that have been seen in the past few months. Many ransomware groups face challenges in managing data leak sites and hosting data on the Dark Web for download, leading to some groups exposing data on public file-sharing websites. Data-leak sites may also leave ransomware groups vulnerable to attacks.</p> <p>"As Q4 comes near, it will be interesting to see if issues relating to managing data leak sites will discourage new ransomware groups to continue to pursue the path of data-leak sites, or what creative solutions they will create to work around these issues," researchers write.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> | Read more details <a href="#">here</a> .  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Beware: Squid Game app infects Androids</b> |
|----------|--|

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| SOURCE | <a href="https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/beware-squid-game-app-caught-infecting-android-devices-check-details/2356500/?web_view=true">https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/beware-squid-game-app-caught-infecting-android-devices-check-details/2356500/?web_view=true</a>  |
| GIST   | <p>Squid Game, Netflix's current most popular and widely streamed series is now catching up with the hot trend as well. From Halloween inspired nail art to Halloween costumes and now even with the smartphone apps, the Squid Game fever is not getting over any time soon, at least for now.</p> <p>The cybercriminals, however, are up to something else. A cybersecurity firm has recently flagged that the app for Squid Game wallpapers is being used to spread malware in phone devices. Taking the issue into cognizance, the <a href="#">Google</a> Play Store immediately took down the app. A cybersecurity researcher Lukas Stefanko (Malware Researcher at ESET), discovered that the app 'Squid Wallpaper 4K HD' contains a notorious 'Joker' malware which is being used to infect Android devices.</p> <p>The Joker malware is not new and has been around for some time now. It has been spotted on Google Play Store earlier as well. This is, however, the first instance when action has been taken against Squid Game-based apps.</p> <p>As per researcher's post, running Squid Game themed Android Joker on the device "might result in malicious ad-fraud and/or unwanted SMS subscription actions". The app had been installed more than 5,000 times before it was taken down from Google Play Store. The post further read, "the app could download and execute native libraries and even execute APK payloads, the security researcher noted in his post. This could be used to install the Joker malware on devices."</p> <p><b>What if you have already downloaded the app?</b></p> <p>The app for now has been removed from the Play Store. But the users who still have this malware app installed but immediately uninstall it from their devices. Stefanko, in another related post, stated, "there are more than 200 apps based on Squid Game available on Google Play. The most downloaded out of these apps reached one million downloads within 10 days." "Seems like a great opportunity to make money on in-app ads from one of the most popular TV shows without an official game," he further wrote.</p> |
|        | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Big tech data centers spark worry: water</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/big-tech-data-centers-spark-worry-scarce-western-80778123">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/big-tech-data-centers-spark-worry-scarce-western-80778123</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>THE DALLES, Ore. -- Conflicts over water are as old as history itself, but the massive Google data centers on the edge of this Oregon town on the Columbia River represent an emerging 21st century concern.</p> <p>Now a critical part of modern computing, data centers help people stream movies on Netflix, conduct transactions on PayPal, post updates on Facebook, store trillions of photos and more. But a single facility can also churn through millions of gallons of water per day to keep hot-running equipment cool.</p> <p>Google wants to build at least two more data centers in The Dalles, worrying some residents who fear there eventually won't be enough water for everyone — including for area farms and fruit orchards, which are by far the biggest users.</p> <p>Across the United States, there has been some mild pushback as tech companies build and expand data centers — conflicts likely to grow as water becomes a more precious resource amid the threat of climate change and as the demand for cloud computing grows. Some tech giants have been using cutting-edge research and development to find less impactful cooling methods, but there are those who say the companies can still do more to be environmentally sustainable.</p> <p>The concerns are understandable in The Dalles, the seat of Wasco County, which is suffering extreme and exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The region last summer endured its hottest days on record, reaching 118 degrees Fahrenheit (48 Celsius) in The Dalles.</p> |

The Dalles is adjacent to the the mighty Columbia River, but the new data centers wouldn't be able to use that water and instead would have to take water from rivers and groundwater that has gone through the city's water treatment plant.

However, the snowpack in the nearby Cascade Range that feeds the aquifers varies wildly year-to-year and glaciers are melting. Most aquifers in north-central Oregon are declining, according to the U.S. Geological Survey Groundwater Resources Program.

Adding to the unease: The 15,000 town residents don't know how much water the proposed data centers will use, because Google calls it a trade secret. Even the town councilors, who are scheduled to vote on the proposal on Nov. 8, had to wait until this week to find out.

Dave Anderson, public works director for The Dalles, said Google obtained the rights to 3.9 million gallons of water per day when it purchased land formerly home to an aluminum smelter. Google is requesting less water for the new data centers than that amount and would transfer those rights to the city, Anderson said.

"The city comes out ahead," he said.

For its part, Google said it's "committed to the long-term health of the county's economy and natural resources."

"We're excited that we're continuing conversations with local officials on an agreement that allows us to keep growing while also supporting the community," Google said, adding that the expansion proposal includes a potential aquifer program to store water and increase supply during drier periods.

The U.S. hosts 30% of the world's data centers, more than any other country. Some data centers are trying to become more efficient in water consumption, for example by recycling the same water several times through a center before discharging it. Google even uses treated sewage water, instead of using drinking water as many data centers do, to cool its facility in Douglas County, Georgia.

Facebook's first data center took advantage of the cold high-desert air in Prineville, Oregon, to chill its servers, and went a step further when it built a center in Lulea, Sweden, near the Arctic Circle.

Microsoft even placed a small data center, enclosed in what looks like a giant cigar, on the seafloor off Scotland. After retrieving the barnacle-encrusted container last year after two years, company employees saw improvement in overall reliability because the servers weren't subjected to temperature fluctuations and corrosion from oxygen and humidity. Team leader Ben Cutler said the experiment shows data centers can be kept cool without tapping freshwater resources.

A study published in May by researchers at Virginia Tech and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory showed one-fifth of data centers rely on water from moderately to highly stressed watersheds.

Tech companies typically consider tax breaks and availability of cheap electricity and land when placing data centers, said study co-author Landon Marston, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Virginia Tech.

They need to consider water impacts more seriously, and put the facilities in regions where they can be better sustained, both for the good of the environment and their own bottom line, Marston said.

"It's also a risk and resilience issue that data centers and their operators need to face, because the drought that we're seeing in the West is expected to get worse," Marston said.

About an hour's drive east of The Dalles, Amazon is giving back some of the water its massive data centers use. Amazon's sprawling campuses, spread between Boardman and Umatilla, Oregon, butt up

against farmland, a cheese factory and neighborhoods. Like many data centers, they use water primarily in summer, with the servers being air-cooled the rest of the year.

About two-thirds of the water Amazon uses evaporates. The rest is treated and sent to irrigation canals that feed crops and pastures.

Umatilla City Manager Dave Stockdale appreciates that farms and ranches are getting that water, since the main issue the city had as Amazon's facilities grew was that the city water treatment plant couldn't have handled the data centers' discharge.

John DeVoe, executive director of WaterWatch of Oregon, which seeks reform of water laws to protect and restore rivers, criticized it as a "corporate feel good tactic."

"Does it actually mitigate for any harm of the server farm's actual use of water on other interests who may also be using the same source water, like the environment, fish and wildlife?" DeVoe said.

Adam Selipsky, CEO of Amazon Web Services, insists that Amazon feels a sense of responsibility for its impacts.

"We have intentionally been very conscious about water usage in any of these projects," he said, adding that the centers brought economic activity and jobs to the region.

Dawn Rasmussen, who lives on the outskirts of The Dalles, worries that her town is making a mistake in negotiating with Google, likening it to David versus Goliath.

She's seen the level of her well-water drop year after year and worries sooner or later there won't be enough for everyone.

"At the end of the day, if there's not enough water, who's going to win?" she asked.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Russia renews cybersurveillance campaign   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/politics/russia-cybersurveillance-biden.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/politics/russia-cybersurveillance-biden.html</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>SEA ISLAND, Ga. — Russia's premier intelligence agency has launched another campaign to pierce thousands of U.S. government, corporate and think-tank computer networks, Microsoft officials and cybersecurity experts warned on Sunday, only months after President Biden imposed sanctions on Moscow in response to a series of sophisticated spy operations it had conducted around the world.</p> <p>The new effort is "very large, and it is ongoing," Tom Burt, one of Microsoft's top security officers, said in an interview. Government officials confirmed that the operation, apparently aimed at acquiring data stored in the cloud, seemed to come out of the S.V.R., the Russian intelligence agency that was the first to enter the Democratic National Committee's networks during the 2016 election.</p> <p>While Microsoft insisted that the percentage of successful breaches was small, it did not provide enough information to accurately measure the severity of the theft.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the White House blamed the S.V.R. for the so-called <a href="#">SolarWinds hacking</a>, a highly sophisticated effort to <a href="#">alter software used by government agencies</a> and the nation's largest companies, giving the Russians broad access to 18,000 users. Mr. Biden said the attack undercut trust in the government's basic systems and vowed retaliation for both the intrusion and election interference. But when he <a href="#">announced sanctions against Russian financial institutions</a> and technology companies in April, he pared back the penalties.</p> <p>"I was clear with President Putin that we could have gone further, but I chose not to do so," Mr. Biden said at time, after calling the Russian leader. "Now is the time to de-escalate."</p> |

American officials insist that the type of attack Microsoft reported falls into the category of the kind of spying major powers regularly conduct against one another. Still, the operation suggests that even while the two governments say they are meeting regularly to combat ransomware and other maladies of the internet age, the undermining of networks continues apace in an arms race that has sped up as countries sought Covid-19 vaccine data and a range of industrial and government secrets.

“Spies are going to spy,” John Hultquist, the vice president for intelligence analysis at Mandiant, the company that first detected the SolarWinds attack, said on Sunday at the Cipher Brief Threat Conference in Sea Island, where many cyberexperts and intelligence officials met. “But what we’ve learned from this is that the S.V.R., which is very good, isn’t slowing down.”

It is not clear how successful the latest campaign has been. Microsoft said it recently notified more than 600 organizations that they had been the target of about 23,000 attempts to enter their systems. By comparison, the company said it had detected only 20,500 targeted attacks from “all nation-state actors” over the past three years. Microsoft said a small percentage of the latest attempts succeeded but did not provide details or indicate how many of the organizations were compromised.

American officials confirmed that the operation, which they consider routine spying, was underway. But they insisted that if it was successful, it was Microsoft and similar providers of cloud services who bore much of the blame.

A senior administration official called the latest attacks “unsophisticated, run-of-the mill operations that could have been prevented if the cloud service providers had implemented baseline cybersecurity practices.”

“We can do a lot of things,” the official said, “but the responsibility to implement simple cybersecurity practices to lock their — and by extension, our — digital doors rests with the private sector.”

Government officials have been pushing to put more data in the cloud because it is far easier to protect information there. (Amazon runs the C.I.A.’s cloud contract; during the Trump administration, Microsoft won a huge contract to move the Pentagon to the cloud, though the program was recently scrapped by the Biden administration amid a long legal dispute about how it was awarded.)

But the most recent attack by the Russians, experts said, was a reminder that moving to the cloud is no solution — especially if those who administer the cloud operations use insufficient security.

Microsoft said the attack was focused on its “resellers,” firms that customize the use of the cloud for companies or academic institutions. The Russian hackers apparently calculated that if they could infiltrate the resellers, those firms would have high-level access to the data they wanted — whether it was government emails, defense technologies or vaccine research.

The Russian intelligence agency was “attempting to replicate the approach it has used in past attacks by targeting organizations integral to the global information technology supply chain,” Mr. Burt said.

That supply chain is the chief target of the Russian government hackers — and, increasingly, Chinese hackers who are trying to replicate Russia’s most successful techniques.

In the [SolarWinds case](#) late last year, targeting the supply chain meant that Russian hackers subtly changed the computer code of network-management software used by companies and government agencies, surreptitiously inserting the corrupted code just as it was being shipped out to 18,000 users.

Once those users updated to a new version of the software — much as tens of millions of people update an iPhone every few weeks — the Russians suddenly had access to their entire network.

In the latest attack, the S.V.R., known as a stealthy operator in the cyberworld, used techniques more akin to brute force. As described by Microsoft, the incursion primarily involved deploying a huge database of



stolen passwords in automated attacks intended to get Russian government hackers into Microsoft's cloud services. It is a messier, less efficient operation — and it would work only if some of the resellers of Microsoft's cloud services had not imposed some of the cybersecurity practices that the company required of them last year.

Microsoft said in a blog post scheduled to be made public on Monday that it would do more to enforce contractual obligations by its resellers to put security measures in place.

“What the Russians are looking for is systemic access,” said Christopher Krebs, who ran the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency at the Department of Homeland Security until he was [fired by President Donald J. Trump](#) last year for declaring that the 2020 election had been run honestly and with no significant fraud. “They don’t want to try to pop into accounts one by one.”

Federal officials say that they are aggressively using new authorities from Mr. Biden to protect the country from cyberthreats, particularly noting a broad new international effort to disrupt ransomware gangs, many of which are based in Russia. With a new and far larger team of senior officials overseeing the government's cyberoperations, Mr. Biden has been trying to mandate security changes that should make attacks like the most recent one much harder to pull off.

In response to SolarWinds, the White House announced a series of deadlines for government agencies, and all contractors dealing with the federal government, to carry out a new round of security practices that would make them harder targets for Russian, Chinese, Iranian and North Korean hackers. Those included basic steps like a second method of authenticating who is entering an account, akin to how banks or credit card companies send a code to a cellphone or other device to ensure that a stolen password is not being used.

But adherence to new standards, while improved, remains spotty. Companies often resist government mandates or say that no single set of regulations can capture the challenge of locking down different kinds of computer networks. An effort by the administration to require companies to report breaches of their systems to the government within 24 hours, or be subject to fines, has run into intense opposition from corporate lobbyists.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 SolarWinds hackers continue attacks</b>   |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/microsoft-solarwinds-hackers-continue-to-hit-technology-companies-11635145200">https://www.wsj.com/articles/microsoft-solarwinds-hackers-continue-to-hit-technology-companies-11635145200</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>The Russia-linked hackers behind last year's compromise of a wide swath of the U.S. government and scores of private companies, including <a href="#">SolarWinds Corp.</a> <a href="#">SWI -0.21%</a>, have stepped up their attacks in recent months, breaking into technology companies in an effort to steal sensitive information, cybersecurity experts said.</p> <p>In a campaign that dates back to May of this year, the hackers have targeted more than 140 technology companies including those that manage or resell cloud-computing services, according to new research from <a href="#">Microsoft Corp.</a> <a href="#">MSFT -0.42%</a>. The attack, which was successful with as many as 14 of these technology companies, involved unsophisticated techniques like phishing or simply guessing user passwords in hopes of gaining access to systems, Microsoft said.</p> <p>“This recent activity is another indicator that Russia is trying to gain long-term, systematic access to a variety of points in the technology supply chain,” said Tom Burt, Microsoft's corporate vice president for customer security and trust, according to a blog post provided ahead of the announcement by Microsoft on Monday.</p> <p>Security experts say last year's SolarWinds incident was concerning because it showed how a compromise at one widely used link in the technology supply chain could be made into a jumping off point for further attacks. <a href="#">After government officials attributed it to Russia's foreign intelligence service</a>, the Biden administration in</p> |

April [punished Moscow for the attack](#) and other alleged malicious cyber activity with financial sanctions and diplomatic expulsions.

That doesn't appear to have deterred the hackers. Microsoft says it observed the group linked to the SolarWinds attack targeting 609 companies 22,868 times between July 1 and Oct. 19 of this year. That is more attempts than Microsoft observed from all government-linked hackers in the previous three years, Mr. Burt said.

The intrusion at SolarWinds, which went undiscovered for more than a year, was part of a hacking campaign that gave intruders footholds in [at least nine federal agencies and 100 private companies](#). Microsoft itself and the cybersecurity company [FireEye](#) were compromised during the incident.

But not all of the break-ins involved SolarWinds software. Government officials say 30% of the victims didn't use SolarWinds products.

The hack is regarded as one of the U.S.'s worst intelligence failures in years. Moscow has denied involvement. A representative for the Russian Embassy in Washington didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The latest disclosure of Russia's alleged activities comes as the Biden administration has sought to curtail Moscow's cyber aggression through a variety of means, including continuing bilateral meetings intended to address a glut of ransomware attacks from Russian cybercriminal gangs on critical American infrastructure and businesses. Officials have offered mixed views on whether Moscow has cracked down on those criminal groups in response to U.S. pressure.

A U.S. government official briefed on Microsoft's findings said the latest intrusion attempts appeared to be largely routine hacking handiwork from Russia.

"Based on the details in Microsoft's blog, the activities described were unsophisticated password spray and phishing, run-of-the mill operations for the purpose of surveillance that we already know are attempted every day by Russia and other foreign governments," the U.S. government official said.

The official said the attempted intrusions "could have been prevented if the cloud service providers had implemented baseline cybersecurity practices, including multifactor authentication," referring to account features that require verifying a login with a code sent to a phone or other device.

SolarWinds, a seller of network management software, remains unsure of how it was first breached, but company executives and investigators have said that the initial point of entry could have been the same type of unsophisticated techniques that Microsoft has observed in this more recent activity.

Supply-chain cybersecurity has drawn unprecedented interest in Washington over the past several months, in part due to the devastating and wide-ranging impact of the SolarWinds compromise. Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill 412-2 that would require the Department of Homeland Security to issue guidance to federal contractors asking them to submit details of software in their own supply chains—including origins of technology—to DHS for potential review.

The congressional action follows an executive order signed by President Biden in May, also shaped in part by the SolarWinds breach, that created baseline cybersecurity standards for U.S. agencies and their software contractors, including mandates to use multifactor authentication and data encryption.

"The SolarWinds incident was a turning point for our nation," Gen. Paul Nakasone, the director of the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command, said at a conference earlier this month, calling it a "significant intrusion by a foreign adversary that was trying to do our nation harm."

[Return to Top](#)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/what-are-the-facebook-papers-10e59530a699db5345ac3931509778b2">https://apnews.com/article/what-are-the-facebook-papers-10e59530a699db5345ac3931509778b2</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>The Facebook Papers project represents a unique collaboration among 17 American news organizations, including The Associated Press. Journalists from a variety of newsrooms, large and small, worked together to gain access to <a href="#">thousands of pages of internal company documents</a> obtained by Frances Haugen, the former Facebook product manager-turned-whistleblower.</p> <p>A separate consortium of European news outlets had access to the same set of documents, and members of both groups began publishing content related to their analysis of the materials at 7 a.m. EDT on Monday, Oct. 25. That date and time was set by the partner news organizations to give everyone in the consortium an opportunity to fully analyze the documents, report out relevant details, and to give Facebook's public relations staff ample time to respond to questions and inquiries raised by that reporting.</p> <p>Each member of the consortium pursued its own independent reporting on the document contents and their significance. Every member also had the opportunity to attend group briefings to gain information and context about the documents.</p> <p>The launch of The Facebook Papers project follows <a href="#">similar reporting by The Wall Street Journal</a>, sourced from the same documents, as well as Haugen's <a href="#">appearance on the CBS television show "60 Minutes"</a> and her Oct. 5 Capitol Hill <a href="#">testimony before a U.S. Senate subcommittee</a>.</p> <p>The papers themselves are redacted versions of disclosures that Haugen has made over several months to the Securities and Exchange Commission, alleging Facebook was prioritizing profits over safety and hiding its own research from investors and the public.</p> <p>These complaints cover a range of topics, from its efforts to continue growing its audience, to how its platforms might harm children, to its alleged role in inciting political violence. The same redacted versions of those filings are being provided to members of Congress as part of its investigation. And that process continues as Haugen's legal team goes through the process of redacting the SEC filings by removing the names of Facebook users and lower-level employees and turns them over to Congress.</p> <p>The Facebook Papers consortium will continue to report on these documents as more become available in the coming days and weeks.</p> <p>"AP regularly teams up with other news organizations to bring important journalism to the world," said Julie Pace, senior vice president and executive editor. "The Facebook Papers project is in keeping with that mission. In all collaborations, AP maintains its editorial independence."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Facebook gaps weaken terrorism screening</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/the-facebook-papers-language-moderation-problems-392cb2d065f81980713f37384d07e61f">https://apnews.com/article/the-facebook-papers-language-moderation-problems-392cb2d065f81980713f37384d07e61f</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As the Gaza war raged and tensions surged across the Middle East last May, Instagram briefly banned the hashtag #AlAqsa, a reference to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City, a flash point in the conflict.</p> <p><a href="#">Facebook</a>, which owns Instagram, later apologized, explaining its algorithms had mistaken the third-holiest site in Islam for the militant group Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, an armed offshoot of the secular Fatah party.</p> <p>For many Arabic-speaking users, it was just the latest potent example of how the social media giant muzzles political speech in the region. Arabic is among the most common languages on Facebook's platforms, and the company issues frequent public apologies after similar botched content removals.</p> |

Now, [internal company documents from the former Facebook product manager-turned-whistleblower Frances Haugen](#) show the problems are [far more systemic](#) than just a few innocent mistakes, and that Facebook has understood the depth of these failings for years while doing little about it.

Such errors are not limited to Arabic. An examination of the files reveals that in some of the world's most volatile regions, terrorist content and hate speech proliferate because the company remains short on moderators who speak local languages and understand cultural contexts. And its platforms have failed to develop artificial-intelligence solutions that can catch harmful content in different languages.

In countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar, these loopholes have allowed inflammatory language to flourish on the platform, while in Syria and the Palestinian territories, Facebook suppresses ordinary speech, imposing blanket bans on common words.

"The root problem is that the platform was never built with the intention it would one day mediate the political speech of everyone in the world," said Eliza Campbell, director of the Middle East Institute's Cyber Program. "But for the amount of political importance and resources that Facebook has, moderation is a bafflingly under-resourced project."

This story, along with others published Monday, [is based on Haugen's disclosures to the Securities and Exchange Commission](#), which were also provided to Congress in redacted form by her legal team. The redacted versions were reviewed by a consortium of news organizations, including The Associated Press. In a statement to the AP, a Facebook spokesperson said that over the last two years the company has invested in recruiting more staff with local dialect and topic expertise to bolster its review capacity around the world.

But when it comes to Arabic content moderation, the company said, "We still have more work to do. ... We conduct research to better understand this complexity and identify how we can improve."

In Myanmar, where Facebook-based misinformation has been linked repeatedly to ethnic and religious violence, the company acknowledged in its internal reports that it had failed to stop the spread of hate speech targeting the minority Rohingya Muslim population.

The Rohingya's persecution, which the U.S. has described as ethnic cleansing, led Facebook to publicly pledge in 2018 that it would recruit 100 native Myanmar language speakers to police its platforms. But the company never disclosed how many content moderators it ultimately hired or revealed which of the nation's many dialects they covered.

Despite Facebook's public promises and many internal reports on the problems, the rights group Global Witness said the company's recommendation algorithm continued to amplify army propaganda and other content that breaches the company's Myanmar policies following a military coup in February.

In India, the [documents show Facebook employees debating](#) last March whether it could clamp down on the "fear mongering, anti-Muslim narratives" that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's far-right Hindu nationalist group, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, broadcasts on its platform.

In one document, the company notes that users linked to Modi's party had created multiple accounts to supercharge the spread of Islamophobic content. Much of this content was "never flagged or actioned," the research found, because Facebook lacked moderators and automated filters with knowledge of Hindi and Bengali.

Arabic poses particular challenges to Facebook's automated systems and human moderators, each of which struggles to understand spoken dialects unique to each country and region, their vocabularies salted with different historical influences and cultural contexts.

The Moroccan colloquial Arabic, for instance, includes French and Berber words, and is spoken with short vowels. Egyptian Arabic, on the other hand, includes some Turkish from the Ottoman conquest. Other

dialects are closer to the “official” version found in the Quran. In some cases, these dialects are not mutually comprehensible, and there is no standard way of transcribing colloquial Arabic.

Facebook first developed a massive following in the Middle East during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, and users credited the platform with providing a rare opportunity for free expression and a critical source of news in a region where autocratic governments exert tight controls over both. But in recent years, that reputation has changed.

Scores of Palestinian journalists and activists have had their accounts deleted. Archives of the Syrian civil war have disappeared. And a vast vocabulary of everyday words have become off-limits to speakers of Arabic, Facebook’s third-most common language with millions of users worldwide.

For Hassan Slaieh, a prominent journalist in the blockaded Gaza Strip, the first message felt like a punch to the gut. “Your account has been permanently disabled for violating Facebook’s Community Standards,” the company’s notification read. That was at the peak of the bloody 2014 Gaza war, following years of his news posts on violence between Israel and Hamas being flagged as content violations.

Within moments, he lost everything he’d collected over six years: personal memories, stories of people’s lives in Gaza, photos of Israeli airstrikes pounding the enclave, not to mention 200,000 followers. The most recent Facebook takedown of his page last year came as less of a shock. It was the 17th time that he had to start from scratch.

He had tried to be clever. Like many Palestinians, he’d learned to avoid the typical Arabic words for “martyr” and “prisoner,” along with references to Israel’s military occupation. If he mentioned militant groups, he’d add symbols or spaces between each letter.

Other users in the region have taken an increasingly savvy approach to tricking Facebook’s algorithms, employing a centuries-old Arabic script that lacks the dots and marks that help readers differentiate between otherwise identical letters. The writing style, common before Arabic learning exploded with the spread of Islam, has circumvented hate speech censors on Facebook’s Instagram app, according to the internal documents.

But Slaieh’s tactics didn’t make the cut. He believes Facebook banned him simply for doing his job. As a reporter in Gaza, he posts photos of Palestinian protesters wounded at the Israeli border, mothers weeping over their sons’ coffins, statements from the Gaza Strip’s militant Hamas rulers.

Criticism, satire and even simple mentions of groups on the company’s Dangerous Individuals and Organizations list — a docket modeled on the U.S. government equivalent — are grounds for a takedown. “We were incorrectly enforcing counterterrorism content in Arabic,” one document reads, noting the current system “limits users from participating in political speech, impeding their right to freedom of expression.”

The Facebook blacklist includes Gaza’s ruling Hamas party, as well as Hezbollah, the militant group that holds seats in Lebanon’s Parliament, along with many other groups representing wide swaths of people and territory across the Middle East, the internal documents show, resulting in what Facebook employees describe in the documents as widespread perceptions of censorship.

“If you posted about militant activity without clearly condemning what’s happening, we treated you like you supported it,” said Mai el-Mahdy, a former Facebook employee who worked on Arabic content moderation until 2017.

In response to questions from the AP, Facebook said it consults independent experts to develop its moderation policies and goes “to great lengths to ensure they are agnostic to religion, region, political outlook or ideology.”

“We know our systems are not perfect,” it added.

The company's language gaps and biases have led to the widespread perception that its reviewers skew in favor of governments and against minority groups.

Former Facebook employees also say that various governments exert pressure on the company, threatening regulation and fines. Israel, a lucrative source of advertising revenue for Facebook, is the only country in the Mideast where Facebook operates a national office. Its public policy director previously advised former right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli security agencies and watchdogs monitor Facebook and bombard it with thousands of orders to take down Palestinian accounts and posts as they try to crack down on incitement.

"They flood our system, completely overpowering it," said Ashraf Zeitoon, Facebook's former head of policy for the Middle East and North Africa region, who left in 2017. "That forces the system to make mistakes in Israel's favor. Nowhere else in the region had such a deep understanding of how Facebook works."

Facebook said in a statement that it fields takedown requests from governments no differently from those from rights organizations or community members, although it may restrict access to content based on local laws.

"Any suggestion that we remove content solely under pressure from the Israeli government is completely inaccurate," it said.

Syrian journalists and activists reporting on the country's opposition also have complained of censorship, with electronic armies supporting embattled President Bashar Assad aggressively flagging dissident content for removal.

Raed, a former reporter at the Aleppo Media Center, a group of antigovernment activists and citizen journalists in Syria, said Facebook erased most of his documentation of Syrian government shelling on neighborhoods and hospitals, citing graphic content.

"Facebook always tells us we break the rules, but no one tells us what the rules are," he added, giving only his first name for fear of reprisals.

In Afghanistan, many users literally cannot understand Facebook's rules. According to an internal report in January, Facebook did not translate the site's hate speech and misinformation pages into Dari and Pashto, the two most common languages in Afghanistan, where English is not widely understood.

When Afghan users try to flag posts as hate speech, the drop-down menus appear only in English. So does the Community Standards page. The site also doesn't have a bank of hate speech terms, slurs and code words in Afghanistan used to moderate Dari and Pashto content, as is typical elsewhere. Without this local word bank, Facebook can't build the automated filters that catch the worst violations in the country.

When it came to looking into the abuse of domestic workers in the Middle East, [internal Facebook documents acknowledged](#) that engineers primarily focused on posts and messages written in English. The flagged-words list did not include Tagalog, the major language of the Philippines, where many of the region's housemaids and other domestic workers come from.

In much of the Arab world, the opposite is true — the company over-relies on artificial-intelligence filters that make mistakes, leading to "a lot of false positives and a media backlash," one document reads. Largely unskilled human moderators, in over their heads, tend to passively field takedown requests instead of screening proactively.

Sophie Zhang, a former Facebook employee-turned-whistleblower who worked at the company for nearly three years before being fired last year, said contractors in Facebook's Ireland office complained to her



they had to depend on Google Translate because the company did not assign them content based on what languages they knew.

Facebook outsources most content moderation to giant companies that enlist workers far afield, from Casablanca, Morocco, to Essen, Germany. The firms don't sponsor work visas for the Arabic teams, limiting the pool to local hires in precarious conditions — mostly Moroccans who seem to have overstated their linguistic capabilities. They often get lost in the translation of Arabic's 30-odd dialects, flagging inoffensive Arabic posts as terrorist content 77% of the time, one document said.

"These reps should not be fielding content from non-Maghreb region, however right now it is commonplace," another document reads, referring to the region of North Africa that includes Morocco. The file goes on to say that the Casablanca office falsely claimed in a survey it could handle "every dialect" of Arabic. But in one case, reviewers incorrectly flagged a set of Egyptian dialect content 90% of the time, a report said.

Iraq ranks highest in the region for its reported volume of hate speech on Facebook. But among reviewers, knowledge of Iraqi dialect is "close to non-existent," one document said.

"Journalists are trying to expose human rights abuses, but we just get banned," said one Baghdad-based press freedom activist, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. "We understand Facebook tries to limit the influence of militias, but it's not working."

Linguists described Facebook's system as flawed for a region with a vast diversity of colloquial dialects that Arabic speakers transcribe in different ways.

"The stereotype that Arabic is one entity is a major problem," said Enam al-Wer, professor of Arabic linguistics at the University of Essex, citing the language's "huge variations" not only between countries but class, gender, religion and ethnicity.

Despite these problems, moderators are on the front lines of what makes Facebook a powerful arbiter of political expression in a tumultuous region.

Although the documents from Haugen predate this year's Gaza war, episodes from that 11-day conflict show how little has been done to address the problems flagged in Facebook's own internal reports.

Activists in Gaza and the West Bank lost their ability to livestream. Whole archives of the conflict vanished from newsfeeds, a primary portal of information for many users. Influencers accustomed to tens of thousands of likes on their posts saw their outreach plummet when they posted about Palestinians.

"This has restrained me and prevented me from feeling free to publish what I want for fear of losing my account," said Soliman Hijji, a Gaza-based journalist whose aerials of the Mediterranean Sea garnered tens of thousands more views than his images of Israeli bombs — a common phenomenon when photos are flagged for violating community standards.

During the war, Palestinian advocates submitted hundreds of complaints to Facebook, often leading the company to concede error and reinstate posts and accounts.

In the internal documents, Facebook reported it had erred in nearly half of all Arabic language takedown requests submitted for appeal.

"The repetition of false positives creates a huge drain of resources," it said.

In announcing the reversal of one such Palestinian post removal last month, Facebook's semi-independent oversight board urged an impartial investigation into the company's Arabic and Hebrew content moderation. It called for improvement in its broad terrorism blacklist to "increase understanding of the

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>exceptions for neutral discussion, condemnation and news reporting,” according to the board’s policy advisory statement.</p> <p>Facebook’s internal documents also stressed the need to “enhance” algorithms, enlist more Arab moderators from less-represented countries and restrict them to where they have appropriate dialect expertise.</p> <p>“With the size of the Arabic user base and potential severity of offline harm ... it is surely of the highest importance to put more resources to the task to improving Arabic systems,” said the report.</p> <p>But the company also lamented that “there is not one clear mitigation strategy.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, many across the Middle East worry the stakes of Facebook’s failings are exceptionally high, with potential to widen long-standing inequality, chill civic activism and stoke violence in the region.</p> <p>“We told Facebook: Do you want people to convey their experiences on social platforms, or do you want to shut them down?” said Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian envoy to the United Kingdom, who recently discussed Arabic content suppression with Facebook officials in London. “If you take away people’s voices, the alternatives will be uglier.”</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Rare win cat-mouse game of ransomware</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/technology/ransomware-emsisoft-blackmatter.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/technology/ransomware-emsisoft-blackmatter.html</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>In a year rife with ransomware attacks, when cybercriminals have held the data of <a href="#">police departments</a>, <a href="#">grocery and pharmacy chains</a>, <a href="#">hospitals</a>, <a href="#">pipelines</a> and <a href="#">water treatment plants</a> hostage with computer code, it was a win, rare in the scale of its success.</p> <p>For months, a team of security experts raced to help victims of a high-profile ransomware group quietly recover their data without paying their digital assailants a dime.</p> <p>It started in late summer, after the cybercriminals behind the <a href="#">Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack</a>, known as DarkSide, emerged under a new name, BlackMatter. Soon after, the cybercriminals made a glaring mistake that most likely cost them tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars.</p> <p>Ransomware criminals encrypt a victim’s data and demand a ransom payment, sometimes millions of dollars, to return access. But when BlackMatter committed a critical error in an update to its code, researchers at Emsisoft, a cybersecurity firm in New Zealand, realized they could exploit the error, decrypt files and return access to the data’s rightful owners.</p> <p>Emsisoft hustled to track down dozens of victims in the United States, Britain and Europe so it could help them secretly unlock their data. In the process, the firm kept millions of dollars in cryptocurrency out of the cybercriminals’ coffers.</p> <p>It was a short-lived victory in the cat-and-mouse game of ransomware, which is expected <a href="#">to cost organizations \$20 billion</a> in losses this year, according to a report from the research firm Cybersecurity Ventures. It was so unusual, even the victims whose data was saved by the effort could not believe it. Many thought Emsisoft was running a scam.</p> <p>Emsisoft officials described their operation, which has not been reported before, in a series of interviews with The New York Times.</p> <p>“At first there was a lot of shock and disbelief,” Fabian Wosar, the chief technology officer at Emsisoft, said last week. “Imagine you have a problem. You think it’s unfixable. Everyone tells you it’s unfixable. Your paranoia is in overdrive. And someone shows up at your front door and says, ‘Hey, by the way I can help you.’”</p> |

To assuage victims' concerns, Emsisoft researchers asked their contacts at cybersecurity companies and government agencies around the world to vouch for them.

While Emsisoft would not identify the victims, it said they had included key manufacturers, transportation companies and food suppliers across continental Europe, Britain and the United States.

The timeline of Emsisoft's effort overlaps with BlackMatter's ransomware assaults last month on two American agriculture organizations: NEW Cooperative, an Iowa grain cooperative, and Crystal Valley, a Minnesota farming supply cooperative. Both cooperatives recovered quickly, suggesting that Emsisoft might have helped. Neither company returned requests for comment.

Eric Goldstein, the executive assistant director for cybersecurity at the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, called the effort a model for public and private collaboration. The agency is trying to develop a comprehensive "whole of nation" plan to address cyberthreats, particularly for "critical infrastructure," most of which is owned by the private sector.

CISA recently created the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative, which teams government agencies with tech firms like Microsoft and Amazon, telecoms like AT&T and Verizon, and cybersecurity firms like CrowdStrike and Palo Alto Networks to address threats like ransomware.

The Emsisoft operation is one of a handful of recent victories, some cursory, over ransomware. In June, the Justice Department announced that it had clawed back \$2.3 million of the \$4.4 million in cryptocurrency that Colonial Pipeline paid BlackMatter. More recently, an operation run by several governments knocked REvil, a major Russian ransomware outfit, offline. The multigovernment effort was [reported earlier by Reuters](#).

That effort followed several smaller victories against REvil last summer. The group, which is responsible for thousands of ransomware attacks, found itself in the government's cross hairs after it pulled off a high-profile attack on JBS, one of the world's biggest meatpacking operators, and Kaseya, a Miami software company. The group used Kaseya's high-level access to its customers to hold hundreds of them hostage over this past Fourth of July holiday.

A week later, REvil's websites went dark, leading to [speculation that governments may have played a role](#). A week after that, Kaseya announced that a mysterious "third party" had given it the key to unlock its customers' encrypted data. In fact, the F.B.I. later confirmed that it had secured a key but delayed giving it to Kaseya's customers while it coordinated with other agencies to take down the group. But before it could act, REvil went off-line on its own.

REvil reappeared in September, before disappearing again last week.

But recent history suggests REvil's operators could just re-emerge under a new name. As long as ransomware groups enjoy immunity in Russia and other nations, ransomware continues to plague American companies and organizations.

The latest to fall victim appears to be the police in Hagerstown, Md. On Friday, the same cybercriminals who hijacked and then leaked sensitive data from [the Washington, D.C., Police Department](#) in April, claimed to have breached the Hagerstown police website and stolen the login credentials. Contacted late Friday, Hagerstown police said they did not believe that employee data was stolen, but were closely monitoring the situation and had changed passwords and taken other mitigation steps.

American cybersecurity officials concede that beyond a few brief triumphs, there has been [no material shift in Russian cyberattacks](#) since President Biden's first summit with Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, in June. Mr. Biden warned Mr. Putin that attacks on America's 16 critical infrastructure sectors — like the food suppliers hit last month — could warrant retaliation.

But last month, when BlackMatter hit NEW Cooperative, cybercriminals mocked the idea that the grain collective counted as critical infrastructure, posting sarcastically that “everyone will incur losses,” in chats monitored by Recorded Future, a cybersecurity firm.

The noise around the NEW Cooperative attack created additional challenges for Emsisoft, the company said. Emsisoft had been finding BlackMatter victims through posts to a Google-owned platform, VirusTotal, which is a kind of search engine for malware.

Those posts helped link Emsisoft’s teams to the chat platform that BlackMatter used to negotiate ransom payouts with its victims. Emsisoft monitored the chats to see if cybercriminals or victims dropped the name of their organization, then used that information to contact the victims.

But after NEW Cooperative’s attack made headlines, unexpected visitors started leaving insults in chat rooms where BlackMatter negotiated payments. When BlackMatter threatened to leak NEW Cooperative’s data online for violating its “data recovery guidelines,” someone replied with an unsavory insult directed at a BlackMatter criminal’s mother.

A representative for NEW Cooperative made clear in the chat that the comment had come not from them but from “random people from the internet.” The exchange prompted BlackMatter to shut down access to its online chats and start vetting anyone who entered. In the process, Emsisoft lost a key way to reach the victims.

Emsisoft knew it could not publish its secret ability without tipping off BlackMatter. But the company was still able to reach several BlackMatter victims whose data had been posted online. (To add pressure, ransomware groups now post a victim’s information online when it refuses to pay.) Emsisoft also worked closely with CISA and other agencies to reach as many victims as it could.

“The reason ransomware operators have gotten away with so much crime is that, until recently, there’s been far too little cooperation and communication all around,” said Brett Callow, a threat analyst at Emsisoft. “This shows that private/public-sector cooperation can put a significant dent in their profits.”

Emsisoft knew it was running out of time. Inevitably, BlackMatter would start to wonder why so many victims stopped paying their ransoms, or why many did not even bother to respond.

Finally, last month, BlackMatter caught the mistake. It was back to the drawing board for researchers at Emsisoft and other companies.

“We are no longer really able to help victims, but we had quite a long run,” Mr. Wosar said.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 New activity from Russian actor Nobelium</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2021/10/24/new-activity-from-russian-actor-nobelium/">https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2021/10/24/new-activity-from-russian-actor-nobelium/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Today, we’re sharing the latest activity we’ve observed from the Russian nation-state actor Nobelium. This is the same actor behind the cyberattacks targeting SolarWinds customers in 2020 and which the U.S. government and others have identified as being part of Russia’s foreign intelligence service known as the SVR.</p> <p>Nobelium has been attempting to replicate the approach it has used in past attacks by targeting organizations integral to the global IT supply chain. This time, it is attacking a different part of the supply chain: resellers and other technology service providers that customize, deploy and manage cloud services and other technologies on behalf of their customers. We believe Nobelium ultimately hopes to piggyback on any direct access that resellers may have to their customers’ IT systems and more easily impersonate an organization’s trusted technology partner to gain access to their downstream customers. We began observing this latest campaign in May 2021 and have been notifying impacted partners and customers while also developing new technical assistance and guidance for the reseller community. Since May, we have notified more than 140 resellers and technology service providers that have been targeted by</p> |

Nobelium. We continue to investigate, but to date we believe as many as 14 of these resellers and service providers have been compromised. Fortunately, we have discovered this campaign during its early stages, and we are sharing these developments to help cloud service resellers, technology providers, and their customers take timely steps to help ensure Nobelium is not more successful.

These attacks have been a part of a larger wave of Nobelium activities this summer. In fact, between July 1 and October 19 this year, we informed 609 customers that they had been attacked 22,868 times by Nobelium, with a success rate in the low single digits. By comparison, prior to July 1, 2021, we had notified customers about attacks from all nation-state actors 20,500 times over the past three years.

This recent activity is another indicator that Russia is trying to gain long-term, systematic access to a variety of points in the technology supply chain and establish a mechanism for surveilling – now or in the future – targets of interest to the Russian government. While we are sharing details here about the most recent activity by Nobelium, the [Microsoft Digital Defense Report](#), published earlier this month, highlights continued attacks from other nation-state actors and cybercriminals. In line with these attacks, we are notifying our customers when they are targeted or compromised by those actors.

The attacks we've observed in the recent campaign against resellers and service providers have not attempted to exploit any flaw or vulnerability in software but rather used well-known techniques, like [password spray and phishing](#), to steal legitimate credentials and gain privileged access. We have learned enough about these new attacks, which began as early as May this year, that we can now provide actionable information which can be used to defend against this new approach.

We've also been coordinating with others in the security community to improve our knowledge of, and protections against, Nobelium's activity, and we've been working closely with government agencies in the U.S. and Europe. While we are clear-eyed that nation-states, including Russia, will not stop attacks like these overnight, we believe steps like the cybersecurity [executive order](#) in the U.S., and the greater coordination and information sharing we've seen between industry and government in the past two years, have put us all in a much better position to defend against them.

We have long maintained and evolved the security requirements and policies we enforce with service providers that sell or support Microsoft technology. For example, in September 2020, we updated contracts with our resellers to expand Microsoft's abilities and rights to address reseller security incidents and to require that resellers implement specific security protections for their environments, such as restricting Partner Portal access and requiring that resellers enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) in accessing our cloud portals and underlying services, and we will take the necessary and appropriate steps to enforce these security commitments. We continue to assess and identify new opportunities to drive greater security throughout the partner ecosystem, recognizing the need for continuous improvement. As a result of what we have learned over the past several months, we are working to implement improvements that will help better secure and protect the ecosystem, especially for the technology partners in our supply chain:

- As noted above, in September 2020, we rolled out MFA to access Partner Center and to use delegated administrative privilege (DAP) to manage a customer environment
- On October 15, we launched a program to provide two years of an Azure Active Directory Premium plan for free that provides extended access to additional premium features to strengthen security controls
- Microsoft threat protection and security operations tools such as Microsoft Cloud App Security (MCAS), M365 Defender, Azure Defender and Azure Sentinel have added detections to help organizations identify and respond to these attacks
- We are currently piloting new and more granular features for organizations that want to provide privileged access to resellers
- We are piloting improved monitoring to empower partners and customers to manage and audit their delegated privileged accounts and remove unnecessary authority
- We are auditing unused privileged accounts and working with partners to assess and remove unnecessary privilege and access

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | Today, we are also releasing <a href="#">technical guidance</a> that can help organizations protect themselves against the latest Nobelium activity we've observed as the actor has honed its techniques as well as <a href="#">guidance for partners</a> . |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

## Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Private citizens to sponsor Afghan refugees</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-refugees-can-be-sponsored-by-private-citizens-under-new-program-11635197674?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-refugees-can-be-sponsored-by-private-citizens-under-new-program-11635197674?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>WASHINGTON—Private citizens will be allowed to sponsor Afghan families under a new program launched Monday by the Biden administration, as overwhelmed agencies have left thousands stuck on military bases in harsh conditions waiting to be resettled.</p> <p>The Sponsor Circle Program will be run along with a nonprofit that was set up last month to help refugees settle in the U.S., filling the role of traditional resettlement agencies. The program will allow private citizens to group together to sponsor families and help them access housing and other necessities like food, clothing and education.</p> <p>The White House has said it is expecting to resettle approximately 95,000 Afghans in the aftermath of <a href="#">the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan</a> and the Taliban's return to power.</p> <p>"Americans of all walks of life have expressed strong interest in helping to welcome these individuals," the State Department said.</p> <p>A huge backlog in processing is putting Afghan families in the difficult position of choosing whether to spend months in camps, often sleeping in tents and with limited access to toilets and showers, or depart after completing their paperwork but before being assigned caseworkers, who help with school enrollment, medical appointments and other needs.</p> <p>Abdul, a former U.S. Embassy employee, decided to move his family into a bedroom at his brother's apartment in California while waiting for his health, nutrition and other benefits to kick in. He had spent weeks living on military cots at Fort Pickett, Va., with his wife and three children, including a newborn who arrived during their time at the camp.</p> <p>"We are starting from zero," he said. "I don't have in my hand even a dollar." The Wall Street Journal agreed to identify him only by his first name.</p> <p>The evacuation came at a time when the refugee resettlement system, run by the State Department but administered by nine nonprofit organizations, had slashed capacity as U.S. admissions of refugees <a href="#">fell to record lows during the Trump administration</a>. These groups were in the process of rebuilding staff and relationships when Afghanistan suddenly collapsed.</p> <p>Veterans and other advocates for Afghan refugees have expressed a desire to step in to help ease the strain on the resettlement system, but have been frustrated by the lack of information about how to help or what is needed. This is also contributing to fear and stigma about the refugees, according to veterans in rural communities.</p> <p>Josh Thiel, a former special operations commander in Afghanistan, lives in Indiana where thousands of Afghans are being housed at Camp Atterbury. He tried to set up a group with childhood friends to find apartments for Afghan families, but was unable to learn who needed help and when. He plans to look into the Sponsor Circles Program.</p> |



“They have sweated, worked and in some cases bled for the idea of liberty far more than most of us,” he said.

The Biden administration had been planning to launch a private refugee sponsorship program since it took office, and the idea was included in an executive order issued by President Biden in February.

The Community Sponsorship Hub, the nonprofit set up to work with the government, quickly shifted its mission in August as the mass evacuation of Afghan refugees from Kabul was under way.

“By early August, we heard there was a pretty significant gap in the capacity to resettle all the Afghans headed for the U.S.,” said Danielle Grigsby, the group’s director of external affairs. “At the same time, there was an unprecedented outpouring of support from people who wanted to do something tangible.”

As of this week, resettlement organizations have told the administration they have capacity to resettle about 62,000 Afghans, a figure that falls short of the 95,000 the White House has said may need to be resettled in total.

Under normal procedures, refugee resettlement organizations are given \$2,275 per person by the State Department to cover initial expenses for 90 days. Under the private sponsorship model, that money would come from donors.

The Afghans enrolled in the private sponsorship program are still eligible for all the other government benefits afforded other refugees, including several months of Medicaid, food assistance and English lessons.

Advocates of a private sponsorship model say it lifts some of the burden from the federal government—private groups sponsoring refugees must raise funds to cover the initial money that goes toward finding refugees homes and paying for other initial expenses.

The criteria to become a sponsor are rigorous. A group of at least five people must submit a detailed plan to the Sponsorship Hub, including which members are responsible for which tasks and how they plan fundraising efforts to cover the \$2,275-per-person cost.

Ms. Grigsby acknowledged the stringent criteria might narrow the number of people willing to sponsor refugees, but said her organization has already heard from veterans groups, religious congregations and [members of the Vietnamese diaspora](#)—whom the U.S. airlifted from Ho Chi Minh City more than a generation ago—who are all interested in sponsoring Afghan families.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 How FBI nabbed German ISIS woman   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-fbi-plot-to-nab-jennifer-wenisch-a-german-isis-woman-over-5-year-old-girls-murder?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-fbi-plot-to-nab-jennifer-wenisch-a-german-isis-woman-over-5-year-old-girls-murder?ref=home</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>“You will be caught and prosecuted if you have committed crimes inside the Islamic State.”</p> <p>That was the strong message conveyed on Monday in the successful prosecution of Jennifer Wenisch, a German female <a href="#">ISIS</a> returnee who had, upon her return to Germany from Syria in 2016, claimed innocence. The truth, however, was far more sinister.</p> <p>27-year-old Wenisch was a convert to Islam who traveled from northwest Germany to Syria to join ISIS in 2014. Once with ISIS, she married Taha al-Jumailly and lived with him in Mosul, where they bought an enslaved <a href="#">Yazidi</a> woman and her 5-year-old daughter. The couple was subsequently implicated in the murder of the child.</p> |

[According to the prosecutor's statements](#): “After the girl fell ill and wet her mattress, the husband of the accused chained her up outside as punishment and let the child die of thirst in the scorching heat... The accused allowed her husband to do so and did nothing to save the girl.”

Wenisch might never have been caught for this crime, had it not been for the cooperation between the [FBI](#) and the [German](#) police. According to police sources—with whom the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) shared over 20 ISIS detainees research interviews, with the detainees full permission—Wenisch wished to get back to ISIS after her return to Germany. And she may have, had the police not caught on to her.

Thinking she was chatting over the internet to a fellow ISIS supporter in 2018, German police said that Wenisch began admitting that she was a member of the ISIS hisbah (ISIS’s brutal morality police) and that she had owned an enslaved Yazidi woman. She agreed to meet the FBI informant she was chatting with and let him drive her across the country to depart Germany under the radar. Unknown to Wenisch was that the FBI and German police cooperating on the case had installed a microphone in the dashboard of the car and that all her admissions of crime were being recorded as they drove across the country together. Playing his part, the FBI informant told her he wished he could accompany her to Syria.

Wenisch admitted to the informant about the slave girl’s murder and about how she had been recruited in mid-2015 to ISIS’s morality police. She, like other Western women who served in the ISIS hisbah, [had been armed with an AK-47 assault rifle, a pistol and an explosives vest](#), as she patrolled city parks in ISIS-occupied Fallujah and Mosul to enforce ISIS’s dress code and bans on alcohol and tobacco.

Instead of making it past Germany’s borders, Wenisch was arrested, and German federal prosecutor Claudia Gorf began assembling her case with the recording in hand. In the same time period, Gorf was approached by Yazidi activists working with Amal Clooney who were trying to get the child’s murder prosecuted on behalf of the surviving Yazidi mother. Federal prosecutor Gorf managed to bring the Yazidi mother, known only as “Nora,” to Germany to testify in the case as the main witness to the child being chained up to die.

Defense attorneys argued that there is no proof that the child actually died as no body or records have been produced. ICSVE researchers, having learned of the case, searched independently with the help of the Iraqi Falcons Intelligence cell for additional evidence of the child’s death as she was taken to Fallujah Hospital, where she either arrived dead or succumbed from unconsciousness to death. While some of the staff remembered the case, the medical records at the hospital had been burned during the ISIS conflicts and could not be retrieved. Nora’s testimony of her child’s cruel death, however, met the threshold of courtroom evidence. Wenisch’s Iraqi husband, Taha al-Jumailly, is also facing a separate trial in Frankfurt with a verdict due in late November.

As with many ISIS returnees, Wenisch wanted to portray herself as innocent upon her return to Germany to evade the justice system. Months after the child’s death in 2015, Wenisch had made her way out of Syria and traveled to Ankara to apply for new identity papers at the German embassy. There, she was [arrested by Turkish security services](#) upon leaving the building, and extradited to her home country. In Germany, Wenisch claimed to be a victim of ISIS propaganda who wanted nothing but to live peacefully at home.

As time would tell, she was not innocent at all, and is now a convicted accomplice to murder. According to the charges made against Wenisch, her “declared goal” after spending some years home in Germany was to travel back to ISIS-controlled territory, [prosecutors said](#). In Monday’s verdict in a Munich court, she was found guilty of “two crimes against humanity in the form of enslavement,” as well as aiding and abetting the girl’s killing by failing to offer help. She was sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

The case marks a great victory for Yazidis, who were, according to most reckonings, the victims of genocide by ISIS and who have been disappointed by Iraqi courts’ failures to recognize specific crimes against Yazidis in their terrorist prosecutions of ISIS members. It is one of the first cases successfully tried that specifically addresses ISIS’s brutal treatment of the Yazidis. Applying the legal principle of universal

jurisdiction, Germany has charged several German and foreign nationals with war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out abroad.

The [UN is currently urging](#) 57 nations to repatriate their nationals held in Syria by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria (AANES), who are exhausted from the burden of caring for more than 57,000 ISIS detainees, most of whom remain uncharged and unprosecuted. Belgium returned six nationals in July, [and just this month, Germany and Denmark just returned 11 women and 37 children](#). There seems to be growing momentum for repatriations with recognition that the children are innocent and that prosecution—if not rehabilitation and reintegration—is possible.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/23 Uganda: 'serious blast' popular restaurant  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211024-deadly-blast-in-ugandan-capital-a-terrorist-act-president">https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211024-deadly-blast-in-ugandan-capital-a-terrorist-act-president</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Police said a "serious blast" occurred at around 9 pm (1800 GMT) on Saturday at a grilled pork joint in Komamboga, a northern Kampala suburb popular with roadside diners.</p> <p>Museveni said he had been briefed that three people left a plastic shopping bag at the scene that later exploded, killing one person and injuring five others.</p> <p>"It seems to be a terrorist act but we shall get the perpetrators," Museveni said in a Twitter post on Sunday.</p> <p>He said investigators were still combing the bomb site and more details would be released later, including advice for the public about "dealing with these possible terrorists".</p> <p>"The public should not fear, we shall defeat this criminality like we have defeated all the other criminality committed by the pigs who don't respect life," Museveni said.</p> <p>The blast occurred about two hours after the start of a nationwide dusk-to-dawn coronavirus curfew.</p> <p>Security forces rushed to the scene, which was cordoned off as the bomb squad picked through the site.</p> <p><b>Terror warnings</b></p> <p>On October 8, the Islamic State group claimed its first attack in Uganda, a bomb attack against a police post in the Kawempe area, near where Saturday's explosion occurred.</p> <p>In a statement issued through its communication channels, the group claimed a unit from its Central Africa operation had detonated an improvised explosive device that resulted in injuries and damage to police infrastructure.</p> <p>No explosion or any injuries were reported by authorities or local media at the time, though police later confirmed a minor incident had occurred without providing further details.</p> <p>However in the following days, both the UK and France updated their travel advice for Uganda, urging vigilance in crowded areas and public places like restaurants, bars and hotels.</p> <p>"Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Uganda. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners," stated the updated advice from the UK.</p> <p>In 2010, twin bombings in Kampala targeting fans watching the World Cup final left 76 people dead.</p> <p>Somalia's Al-Shabaab militant group claimed responsibility for the blasts at a restaurant and at a rugby club.</p> <p>The attack, the first outside Somalia by the insurgents, was seen as revenge for Uganda sending troops to the war-torn country as part of an African Union mission to confront Al-Shabaab.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/23 Military: senior AQ leader killed in strike</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.politico.com/news/2021/10/23/us-military-killed-al-qaida-leader-516885">https://www.politico.com/news/2021/10/23/us-military-killed-al-qaida-leader-516885</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>The U.S. military said it killed a senior al-Qaida leader in an airstrike Friday in northwest Syria.</p> <p>Army Maj. John Rigsbee, a spokesperson for U.S. Central Command, said in a statement that Abdul Hamid al-Matar was killed by a drone strike.</p> <p>Rigsbee said the killing of al-Matar will disrupt al-Qaida's "ability to further plot and carry out global attacks threatening U.S. citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians." He said al-Qaida "uses Syria as a base for threats reaching into Syria, Iraq and beyond."</p> <p>The drone strike came two days after a U.S. military outpost in southern Syria was hit by a coordinated attack that included drones and rockets. U.S. officials said no American troops stationed there were injured or killed.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/23 Pakistan support Taliban fight against ISIS</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/23/afghanistan-isis-pakistan-intelligence/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/23/afghanistan-isis-pakistan-intelligence/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>KABUL — As the Islamic State-Khorasan is ramping up attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan is using a network of informal channels to feed intelligence and technical support to the Taliban to combat <a href="#">the threat</a>, according to two Taliban leaders.</p> <p>Pakistan is passing the group raw information as well as helping it monitor phone and Internet communication to identify Islamic State members and operational hubs, according to a senior Taliban leader who, along with a Taliban commander and others in this report, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.</p> <p>A Pakistani official described the communication between the two sides as informal discussions, rather than an established intelligence-sharing partnership.</p> <p>Pakistan appears to be one of the few foreign governments directly aiding the Taliban in the <a href="#">Islamic State fight</a>, despite concerns from the United States and other countries that Afghanistan could once again become <a href="#">a haven for militants</a> to carry out attacks on international targets if the Taliban is unable to contain them. Regional rivalries, deep-rooted distrust and the Taliban's <a href="#">counterterrorism shortcomings</a> have also complicated intelligence sharing with the group, according to current and former U.S. officials.</p> <p>"Pakistan is our brother and they support us in many ways, including sharing information and intelligence [about the Islamic State]. If the United States and the rest of the world shares information with us we could defeat Daesh in just days," said the senior Taliban leader, using another name for the Islamic State.</p> <p>A Taliban spokesman, Bilal Karimi, pushed back against statements from Taliban members that the group needs international cooperation to fight other militants. The Islamic State "is not a serious threat to the Islamic Emirate. We don't see it as a major challenge, so we don't need any outside support to tackle this issue."</p> <p>It is unclear how much intelligence countries like the United States would be able to share. Without an embassy or military presence in Afghanistan, U.S. intelligence gathering capabilities have been crippled, and the Taliban has previously denounced the United States for flying drones over Afghan territory.</p> <p>Current and former U.S. officials said there are ongoing challenges in re-establishing an effective intelligence network in the region.</p> |

Intelligence agencies have maintained an array of formal and informal links to the Taliban since the departure of U.S. forces in August, and Americans have routinely sought to share information about Islamic State operations with Taliban counterparts. But, in many cases, the Taliban has appeared uninterested, apparently distrustful of the data or unsure of how to take action on it, according to a U.S. official familiar with communications with the Afghan group.

The Pakistani foreign ministry official said “Pakistan did discuss counterterrorism cooperation with the Afghan Taliban” during a recent visit of Pakistan’s intelligence chief and foreign minister to Kabul. But the official added: “It’s a bit early to say information sharing [or] intelligence cooperation is ongoing.”

“Any cooperation with Kabul can’t be ruled out,” the Pakistani official noted. “Not only Pakistan but other regional states like Russia and Iran are concerned about ISIS. So there could be a counterterrorism understanding at the regional level.”

Despite those regional concerns, the Biden administration is struggling to create stronger military and intelligence partnerships with Afghanistan’s close neighbors, the current and former U.S. officials said. Pakistan and Tajikistan have so far refused to host U.S. bases that would allow the United States to maintain “over-the-horizon” pressure on terrorist threats in Afghanistan.

“There are shrinking options regarding countries on which the U.S. could rely for staging counterterrorism operations,” said Lisa Curtis, a former adviser on South Asia to the White House National Security Council and now director of the Indo-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. Currently, the bulk of the U.S. military assets available for a possible strike in Afghanistan remain in Qatar, some 1,200 miles away, making their use “expensive and risky,” she said.

The head of the U.S. Central Command said it was “yet to be seen” if the Taliban could stop the Islamic State or al-Qaeda from using Afghan territory to launch international terrorist attacks.

“We could get to that point, but I do not yet have that level of confidence,” Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said [in testimony](#) to lawmakers last month.

Afghanistan’s close neighbors are equally concerned about the rise of the Islamic State in Afghanistan, despite a reluctance to work with the United States because of numerous conflicts and competition.

At a meeting [last week](#) in Moscow, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia’s “Central Asian friends” have assured him that they do not want U.S. military units stationed in their countries. While the U.S. military established temporary bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan following the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks, those agreements have long since been vacated.

“The situation right now is very different” than it was when that post-9/11 cooperation took place, said Nargis Kassenova, a senior fellow at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies’ program on Central Asia, at a panel discussion convened last month by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s branch in Moscow. This has given Russia far more influence over the Central Asian states, Kassenova said.

“The last time the American military was present in Central Asia, relations between the biggest powers of the world, Russia and the United States and now China, were much better,” Kassenova said. Today “Russia sees any attempt from the American side to come closer to its borders as a sign of attacking its core interests. For Central Asia, it would be a very costly thing to agree to have something like that on their territory.”

Outreach to the Taliban over possible militant spillover has been made by Iran, which shares a 570-mile border with Afghanistan, and China, which fears increased Islamic State recruitment of Uyghurs, a Muslim minority in western China under relentless pressures from Beijing including “reeducation camps” that have been denounced by the West, rights groups and others.

In a recent video conference with security chiefs of ex-Soviet states, Russian President Vladimir Putin charged that there was a clear “concentration of extremist and terrorist groups” near Afghanistan’s northern borders, focusing on inciting ethnic and religious conflicts and religious hatred.

“The terrorists’ leaders are hatching plots for spreading their influence to the Central Asian countries and Russian regions,” he said according to the Russian news agency Tass.

The Islamic State has far fewer fighters in Afghanistan than the Taliban — roughly 2,000 according to the latest United Nations estimate, compared to Taliban ranks estimated at more than 70,000 — but many fear it could grow if the Taliban fractures or if disaffected Taliban members seeking a return to the battlefield peel off to join other groups.

After the fall of Kabul, the Islamic State launched a campaign of [direct assaults](#) on Taliban security forces as well as escalating violence against Afghanistan’s Shiite minority, which it regards as heretical.

In a month-long spree beginning in mid-September, the Islamic State carried out 47 attacks, ranging from assassinations and assaults on military checkpoints to suicide bombings at Shiite mosques that killed dozens, according to an analysis by ExTrac, a private British company that monitors violence by militants in Afghanistan and other conflict zones. All but seven of the attacks targeted Taliban fighters, the analysis said.

Previously Islamic State attacks sharply declined after a series of U.S.-led operations largely cleared territory held by the group in eastern Afghanistan between 2018 and 2020.

Since then, Islamic State cells moved to urban areas where Afghan government forces with close U.S. support maintained pressure on the group with raids and other ground operations. U.S. surveillance drones and air support were also key to the fight under the previous Afghan government, but even with such assets, government forces were unable to eliminate the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

Now, the Islamic State’s Afghan branch appears to be positioning itself as the primary military opposition to Taliban rule, said Charlie Winter, a terrorism analyst and ExTrac’s director of research.

“There’s been an apparent effort on IS-K’s part to appeal to a broader base of Afghan society,” Winter said. Instead of a blindly ideological and indiscriminately violent movement, “they’re framing themselves as a resistance movement against the Taliban, specially geared toward undermining its government,” he said.

The Taliban has responded by carrying out mass arrests — including at least 1,500 in Nangahar province, near the Pakistan border, Winter said, citing reports and interviews by ExTrac researchers.

The Taliban’s ability to maintain security in largely rural parts of the country that have been under its control for years is a key component of the movement’s popularity in Afghanistan. Taliban leadership has repeatedly pledged to extend that level of security nationwide, but some Taliban members admit doing so requires skills the group does not have.

“When we entered Kabul we didn’t have a professional police force, but training has started and we are building that now,” the senior Taliban leader said. “But even now we are very strong against Daesh. We don’t even arrest many of them, we just kill them,” he said of suspected Islamic State members apprehended by his fighters.

Images shared on social media show a series of killings in eastern Afghanistan where bodies were left in public places accompanied by notes warning others that this is the fate of those who work with the Islamic State. The images could not be independently verified, and Taliban leadership refused to say if the group’s fighters were responsible.



The global Islamic State movement is also now depicting Afghanistan as the epicenter of its ideological struggle. The group's main propaganda organs have trumpeted the successes of its Afghan affiliate, describing the anti-Taliban campaign in an official statement as a "new stage in the blessed jihad."

The Islamic State "has positioned Afghanistan as a foremost priority — both in terms of media and military activity — since the withdrawal of the U.S. and the Taliban's subsequent takeover," said Rita Katz, founder of SITE Intel Group, a Bethesda-based company that tracks militant groups' online messaging.

"Meanwhile, ISIS media, both official and unofficial, is now focused primarily on labeling the Taliban as 'apostates' warning that Afghanistan will be 'the cemetery of the Taliban.' I can't recall seeing an ISIS campaign this strong in recent years against one specific target."

Taliban leaders say they plan to respond with a large-scale operation to defeat the Islamic State in the coming weeks.

Aziz Ahmad Tawakol, a senior member of Taliban intelligence in Kabul, said his forces are preparing for the fight by expanding intelligence networks and refurbishing American surveillance equipment left behind by the former Afghan government. But he denied receiving outside help to do so, saying such exchanges of information only happen at the most senior levels of the movement.

"If someone knows English, they can use the Internet and with the Internet we can learn how to use any equipment," he said.

"We already defeated the United States, so we believe we can defeat Daesh as well and in less time," he said. "Soon no one will even remember their name."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/23 Taliban honor suicide bombers' 'sacrifices'</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/23/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-suicide-bombers.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/23/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-suicide-bombers.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Hussain had just arrived at his office in Afghanistan's capital when the world seemed to explode around him. It was the morning of May 31, 2017, and a truck bomb had just detonated, boring a crater in the earth, <a href="#">killing more than 150 people</a>, most of them civilians, and releasing a shock wave that shattered glass across the city.</p> <p>Hussain suffered head and leg wounds in the blast, one of the largest in two decades of war, and was in constant anguish during months of surgery.</p> <p>The still-lingering pain was made more acute this past week when Hussain watched the new acting minister of interior — Sirajuddin Haqqani, the leader of the very group accused of carrying out the attack — honoring the people who had consigned him to a life of agony: the Taliban's ranks of suicide bombers.</p> <p>"Instead of asking for forgiveness, they are commemorating the suicide bombers," said Hussain, who asked to be identified by first name only out of fear of retribution from the Taliban. "And I will never forgive."</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Taliban government brought together families of suicide bombers at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, praising the deaths of their children and siblings in the fight against the U.S.-backed coalition and Afghan government, and giving them condolence payments and a promise of land.</p> <p>The new government's decision to so publicly memorialize its suicide bomb squads seemed to be both an effort to appease the aggrieved families for the movement's use of their loved ones as weapons and an overt attempt to rewrite the history of the war by championing the bombers' deaths as the highest level of sacrifice. In short, it sought to professionalize the role of suicide bomber.</p> |

“Their sacrifices are for religion, for the country and for Islam,” Mr. Haqqani told the crowd in the gilded ballroom of the same hilltop lodge attacked by the Taliban in 2011 and 2018.

As the Taliban government seeks international recognition after its countrywide takeover this summer, broadcasting an event that honors a tactic long seen as terrorism would seem to do little to help. The Taliban have claimed that suicide attacks were against military targets only, but civilians were often killed and wounded by them.

And while the event delivered a message to the Taliban’s supporters, it was bound to alienate parts of the Afghan population grappling with the group’s return — especially the families of the victims. After more than 40 years of war, the ceremony was one more painful reminder for a population already traumatized by a slew of armed actors, including the Soviet Army and the U.S.-led Western coalition that invaded in 2001.

“The suicide attack by itself is a shameful, cowardly and inhuman act. And justifying such a horrific action to prove yourself legitimate is also certainly shameful,” said Yaser Qobadiyan, whose sister was killed by the Islamic State in a suicide attack in Kabul in 2018 and whose father died in a 2006 car bombing presumed to have been carried out by the Taliban.

“The Taliban should give land and money as compensation for the families of the victims of their suicide attacks,” he added.

The public display also raised questions of how the Taliban will remember the tens of thousands of soldiers killed and wounded while serving in the previous government’s military, and how — or if — their family members will be compensated. This leaves the newly appointed minister of martyrs and disabled affairs, [Abdul Majeed Akhund](#), in a perilous position, having to reckon with two versions of the war and the meaning of sacrifice for those who participated on both sides.

Killing others through one’s own self destruction has been a tool of war for centuries, but according to the United Nations the first suicide attack believed to be carried out in Afghanistan did not occur until Sept. 9, 2001. That’s when foreign operatives of Al Qaeda assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of the Northern Alliance group fighting the Taliban.

The Taliban’s eventual use of frequent suicide attacks, experts say, was most likely connected to a [2003 video](#) by Osama bin Laden in which he called for “martyrdom” operations against the enemy. In the years after the video’s release, the number of suicide attacks in Afghanistan began to climb, first in a trickle. But by 2006, the number had risen to more than 100, and it never abated.

By the end of the war, the Taliban’s use of suicide attacks had evolved from a tool of terror to an integral military tactic, used to seize territory and win battles. Those who carried out the attacks wore slick uniforms and were championed as elite in certain units.

“People told us that fighting with Americans was like fighting with the mountains,” Mr. Haqqani said in his speech this past week. “Allah almighty promised us that one day you guys will be successful, and our teams were discussing with each other, that we have to find suicide bombers to fight against Americans. Otherwise it is impossible to fight against them.”

The Taliban have said suicide bombings were their answer to the West’s more powerful military technology and equated the choice of self-destruction to the ultimate form of resistance.

When Kabul fell in August and the Western-backed government fled, the Taliban’s suicide bombers were ready to attack. If the capital had not fallen as easily as it did, the group was prepared to flood the city with truck bombs.

“The Taliban is trying to institutionalize sacrifice in a way that’s never been done before in Afghanistan,” said David Edwards, a professor of anthropology at Williams College who wrote “Caravan of Martyrs,” a

book about the Taliban and suicide bombing. “This is an act of rewriting history, showing suicide bombers not as disaffected youth, but taking that story and rewriting it as an elite cadre who used their bodies against the technological superiority of the west.”

Watching this week as the families of those who carried out those attacks were compensated, Karam Khan, a former police officer, wondered if his two brothers killed fighting the Taliban would receive the same kind of treatment.

“This kind of propaganda changes ordinary people’s perceptions of those who worked or sacrificed their lives for the republic,” Mr. Khan said. “The Taliban look toward us as their enemies.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 Shadow war against Al Shabab  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/world/africa/al-shabab-somalia-us-cia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/world/africa/al-shabab-somalia-us-cia.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>MOGADISHU, Somalia — The C.I.A. convoy rolled out of Mogadishu in the dead of night, headed south along a crumbling ocean road that led deep into territory controlled by Al Shabab, one of Africa’s deadliest militant groups.</p> <p>The vehicles halted at a seaside village where American and Somali paramilitaries poured out, storming a house and killing several militants, Somali officials said. But one man escaped, sprinted to an explosives-filled vehicle primed for a suicide bombing, and hit the detonator.</p> <p>The blast last November killed three Somalis and grievously wounded an American: Michael Goodboe, 54, a C.I.A. paramilitary specialist and former Navy SEAL, who was airlifted to a U.S. military hospital in Germany. He died 17 days later.</p> <p>His was a rare American fatality in the decade-old shadow war against Al Shabab, the world’s wealthiest and arguably most dangerous Al Qaeda affiliate. But Mr. Goodboe was also a casualty of an American way of war that has flourished since the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, now under greater scrutiny than ever.</p> <p>The United States’ most ambitious response to the 9/11 attacks was in Afghanistan, where tens of thousands of troops were dispatched to banish extremists and rebuild the country — a mission that recently ended in crushing failure with the chaotic American withdrawal.</p> <p>But in Somalia, as in countries like Yemen and Syria, the United States turned to a different playbook, eschewing major troop deployments in favor of spies, Special Operations raids and drone strikes. Private contractors and local fighters were recruited for risky tasks. The mission was narrow at first, a hunt for Qaeda fugitives, only later expanding to include fighting Al Shabab and building up Somali security forces.</p> <p>Now that playbook is also failing. As in Afghanistan, the American mission has been stymied by an alliance with a weak, notoriously corrupt local government, an intractable homegrown insurgency and the United States’ own errors, such as drone strikes that have killed civilians.</p> <p>As a result, Al Shabab are at their strongest in years. They roam the countryside, bomb cities and run an undercover state, complete with courts, extortion rackets and parallel taxes, that netted at least \$120 million last year, by American government estimates.</p> <p>Al Shabab also appear to have designs on the United States, with <a href="#">the arrest in 2019 of a militant</a> while taking flying lessons in the Philippines, allegedly to commit another 9/11-style attack on the United States. But critics of the American approach in Somalia, including some military officers, say that the threat to the homeland has been exaggerated and that Washington’s own policies only boost the extremists they seek to defeat.</p> |

Biden administration officials deny the mission in Somalia has failed, but they say they are clear-eyed about its shortcomings. The administration could unveil a new Somalia policy in coming weeks, some officials said.

The U.S. government has been reluctant to commit troops to Somalia since the “Black Hawk Down” episode of 1993, when Somali militia fighters killed 18 American service members in a blazing battle later depicted in books and Hollywood movies. After that fiasco, the U.S. withdrew from Somalia for more than a decade.

Americans eventually returned in small numbers — covert operatives, soldiers and, lastly, diplomats who are bunkered into a windowless, penitentiary-style embassy at the Mogadishu airport that opened in 2018. Fearing another bloody debacle, they rarely venture out.

Nearby lies the C.I.A. compound, where the air crackles with gunfire at night as the Americans train a small Somali paramilitary force that spearheads anti-Shabab operations.

There are now fewer than 100 American troops in Somalia, mostly in intelligence and support roles. In January, former President Donald J. Trump moved most of the 700-member force across the borders to Kenya and Djibouti, though it continues to conduct strikes in Somalia, and train troops.

Outside the wire, Mogadishu has been transformed in recent years with the help of African Union peacekeepers who patrol the streets. There are trendy cafes, gleaming apartment blocks and fast, cheap internet. The city’s Lido beach is packed on weekends. Piracy, a major international preoccupation a decade ago, has largely vanished.

Yet this progress hangs by a fraying thread. Somalia’s fractious political elite is riven by disputes that erupted briefly into violence this year. After the Taliban’s victory in Afghanistan, gleeful Shabab militants distributed sweets in celebration, hoping they too might wait out the foreigners and seize power.

Other Somalis worried that Washington would abandon them next. “It rang frightening alarm bells,” said Abdihakim Ante, a former Somali government adviser.

The fate of Afghanistan “shows how quickly things can change,” said Stephen Schwartz, a former U.S. ambassador to Somalia. “Somalia has no time to waste.”

The arc of the faltering U.S. mission in Somalia can be seen in the stories of two men, an American and a Somali, on opposite sides of the fight.

### **A Forever Warrior in a Forgotten War**

Michael Goodboe was the archetypal elite fighter of the post-9/11 era.

A member of the elite SEAL Team Six, he deployed to Afghanistan within weeks of the Sept. 11 attacks. He worked from the C.I.A.’s temporary station at the Ariana Hotel in Kabul and joined the first “Omega team” — a highly classified unit combining Special Forces operators and C.I.A. paramilitaries that led the hunt for Osama bin Laden and other fugitives.

Colleagues admired Mr. Goodboe, known as “Goody,” for his easy manner, steady temperament and keen sense of purpose — qualities that stood out in the SEALs’ swaggering subculture, and helped him forge close relationships with the Afghan, and later Somali, troops he helped to train, they said.

Many SEALs “do the minimum time, get their trident” — the SEAL symbol, worn on naval uniforms — “and write a book,” said Capt. Christopher Rohrbach, a 24-year SEAL who has served in East Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq.

But Mr. Goodboe “was a team guy,” he said. “He was there for the greater good.”

After retiring from the Navy in 2009 with a clutch of medals, Mr. Goodboe joined the C.I.A.'s paramilitary wing, now called the Special Activities Center — a clandestine group of about 200 fighters, the vanguard of the agency's far-flung wars. The job eventually took him to Somalia.

The C.I.A. had a checkered history there.

In the mid 2000s, C.I.A. officers based in Nairobi, Kenya, led the American return to Somalia. They regularly flew into a remote airstrip outside Mogadishu, carrying suitcases of money for a coalition of warlords who had promised to help hunt Al Qaeda.

But the operation backfired badly in June 2006 when public hostility toward those warlords galvanized support for an Islamist group, the Islamic Courts Union, that swept to power briefly.

A year later, Al Shabab emerged. The C.I.A. station chief overseeing support for the warlords was transferred.

The C.I.A. returned to Somalia in 2009, establishing a secure base at the Mogadishu airport and teaming up with the National Intelligence Security Agency, Somalia's fledgling spy agency. The Americans also joined the fight against Al Shabab.

C.I.A. snipers deployed to rooftops around the sprawling Bakara Market, then a Shabab stronghold, picking off Islamist fighters from up to a mile away, said a retired Somali intelligence official who worked with the Americans.

In 2011, Somali security forces killed [Fazul Abdullah Mohammed](#), a Qaeda leader behind the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and seized a trove of valuable intelligence, including plots to bomb the elite British school Eton and London's Ritz Hotel.

The Somalis handed everything to the C.I.A., including a memento — the dead militant's unusual model of rifle, said Hussein Sheikh-Ali, then a senior Somali intelligence official and later Somalia's national security adviser. "It was a turning point" in the relationship between the Americans and Somalis, he said.

But as the fruits of cooperation became clear, so did the costs. Human rights groups and United Nations investigators accused Somalia's spy agency of torturing detainees and [using children](#) as spies. Some detainees [recently accused](#) the C.I.A. of complicity in torture.

In 2015, the C.I.A. station chief in Mogadishu pressed for the removal of Gen. Abdirahman Turyare, the Somali intelligence chief, accusing him of corruption and mismanagement. General Turyare said he was the victim of American highhandedness and arrogance.

"I refused to bow before the self-made king," he said in an interview with The Times, referring to the station chief.

The dispute dragged on for a year as State Department leaders appealed to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who comes from the same clan, to take action against General Turyare. Only after Britain's foreign secretary, Philip Hammond, told Somali leaders that their relationship was also endangered by the dispute was General Turyare removed.

At the heart of that dispute, several Somali officials said, was control of Gaashaan, a paramilitary force officially part of the Somali spy agency, but in reality led by the C.I.A.

Since 2009, the C.I.A. has been training Gaashaan, which means "shield," and it has grown into an elite force of 300 troops. Among the trainers was Mr. Goodboe. Gaashaan uses cellphone tracking technology to hunt Shabab commanders, mobilizes against militants when they strike Mogadishu and joins with C.I.A. paramilitary specialists for raids.

By late last year, when Mr. Goodboe arrived in Somalia for another monthslong tour, the C.I.A. and Gaashaan had turned their focus to one Shabab leader in particular — a bomb maker with a background in television.

### **The Master Bomb Maker**

Somalis who once knew him say that Abdullahi Osman Mohamed was an unlikely jihadist kingpin.

“A friendly, energetic guy with a baby face,” recalled Mahmood, a former colleague who gave part of his name to speak freely about one of Somalia’s most dangerous men. “Very smart, very handsome. I often wonder how he became terrorist number one.”

In September 2020 Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [signed an order](#) designating Mr. Mohamed, also known as “Engineer Ismail,” as a “global terrorist.” According to the United States, he is Al Shabab’s senior explosives expert, head of their Al Kataib propaganda wing and a special [adviser](#) to the supreme leader, Ahmed Diriye.

Some Somalis go further, saying that Mr. Mohamed is one of two deputy Shabab leaders.

He was the intended target of the ill-fated November raid in which Mr. Goodboe was fatally injured, according to a retired Somali official and a senior American official who refused to be identified to discuss sensitive intelligence.

The C.I.A. declined to comment. A U.S. official would not say who the target was.

In many ways, Mr. Mohamed typifies the mix of resourcefulness and ruthlessness that has made Al Shabab such a formidable enemy.

He came from a conservative, middle-class Mogadishu family. His father worked for Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, a Saudi charity the United States [accused of links to Al Qaeda](#) in 2002.

Mr. Mohamed, then in his early 20s, graduated from university in Sudan in 2006 and began working as a studio technician for Al Jazeera in Mogadishu. His boss, the station’s Mogadishu bureau chief, Fahad Yasin, later went into politics and became Somalia’s spy chief — a striking illustration of the Somali conflict’s complex layers. Mr. Mohamed later spent time at Al Jazeera’s headquarters in Qatar for training.

It was an especially tumultuous time in Somalia. Ethiopia, backed by the United States, invaded in 2006 to oust the Islamic Courts Union. American [warplanes bombed Islamist forces](#).

Like many Somalis, Mr. Mohamed was enraged, said a family friend who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid reprisals. Ethiopia and Somalia had fought a major war in 1977-78 and remained bitter rivals.

Mr. Mohamed began moonlighting for Al Shabab.

Al Shabab, or “the youth,” were a faction of the defeated Islamic Courts Union. Ousted from Mogadishu, they fled to southern Somalia and launched a guerrilla war, including bombings and assassinations, against Ethiopian soldiers.

By 2008, Al Shabab had become the most radical and powerful armed faction in Somalia, with thousands of recruits. Their leaders condemned what they called American crimes against Muslims across the globe.

The U.S. State Department designated Al Shabab as a terrorist organization in 2008. In 2012, the group pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda.



Al Shabab's broad goal is to establish their vision of an Islamic state in Somalia. In areas they control they have banned music and movies, and impose harsh punishments like stoning accused adulterers and amputating the limbs of accused thieves.

Mr. Mohamed first helped Al Shabab with propaganda, the friend said. Later, as American airstrikes killed successive Shabab explosives experts, the young militant, whose degree was in electrical engineering, was promoted to take their place.

Al Shabab went on to perpetrate a series of horrific attacks including, in 2017, a truck bombing in central Mogadishu that killed [at least 587 people](#) — one of the deadliest terrorist acts in modern world history. As Shabab leaders were killed off and the Danab, an elite, American-trained Somali commando unit, evolved into a powerful anti-Shabab tool, the militants adapted.

They melted into the countryside, where they were harder to hit, and established a rudimentary parallel state with its own courts, bureaucracy and road tolls.

Al Shabab's influence also extends into the heart of Mogadishu, where the group and its supporters have infiltrated Parliament, the business community and the security services, officials say. The Western-backed Somali government is ineffectual in comparison, divided by the corrosive clan politics that have crippled international efforts to unify Somalia's security services. Graft is rampant; Transparency International ranks Somalia, along with South Sudan, as [the most corrupt countries in the world](#).

A Somali intelligence officer in an interview listed the Shabab tax rates at Mogadishu port — \$90 to import a regular container; \$150 for a large one. He produced a neatly written receipt, provided by a city resident, for a \$250 payment to register a recent land sale on the edge of Mogadishu — made out to Al Shabab.

While the militants enforce their writ with violence, many ordinary Somalis grudgingly appreciate their basic services. Even middle-class Mogadishu residents prefer to settle some disputes at Shabab courts that convene under trees in the surrounding countryside.

“If you go to the Somali courts for justice you won't get it, particularly in property disputes,” said Abdirazak Mohamed, a member of Parliament. “Corruption is pervasive and the judges can't enforce their decisions. But Al Shabab can do that.”

Somalia's national army officially has 24,000 troops, but in reality is one-fifth that size, a senior American official said.

American analysts estimate that Al Shabab command anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 fighters. Under Mr. Mohamed, their bombs have grown more sophisticated and powerful.

The group uses its hold on Mogadishu port to smuggle in large volumes of explosive materials and Chinese-made trigger devices, two U.S. officials said. Last October, Somali authorities intercepted 79 tons of sulfuric acid, an ingredient in roadside bombs.

In January, a bomb struck an armored convoy with American-trained Danab commandos, traveling toward Baledogle, a base 70 miles from Mogadishu.

The blast badly wounded the Danab commander, Maj. Ahmed Abdullahi, who was airlifted to Turkey, and killed a South African employee of Bancroft Global Development, an American contractor that recruits and trains Danab fighters. The South African, Stephen Potgieter, was the seventh Bancroft employee to die in Somalia since 2009, said Michael Stock, the company's chief executive.

Mr. Mohamed's growing reputation for chaos and bloodshed has made him a highly respected leader inside Shabab ranks, Somali and Western officials said.

To those pursuing him, he is an elusive figure, always out of reach.

### **American Mistakes**

As in Afghanistan, America's campaign in Somalia has been undermined by its own deadly misfires. After an American missile struck a farmhouse near Jilib, southern Somalia, in February 2020, the military said it had killed a "terrorist." Months later the [military admitted](#) that it had, in fact, killed an 18-year-old schoolgirl named Nurto Kusow Omar Abukar.

The attack also injured her sister, Fatima, then 14, who indicated during an interview where a missile fragment pierced her body. She wakes up screaming from nightmares. "I don't want to say what I see," she said.

Airstrikes in Somalia surged from 2017, when President Trump eased combat rules intended to protect civilians. The military admits killing several civilians but has not paid compensation — a contrast with Afghanistan and Iraq, where just in 2019 the U.S. [made hundreds of payments worth \\$1.5 million](#) for death, injury or property damage.

In an email, Nicole D. Kirschmann, a spokeswoman for the United States Africa Command, declined to explain why no such payments were made in Somalia. But she said that Somali officials reviewed and approved each compensation decision.

Although Washington is by far the largest foreign donor to Somalia, giving \$500 million in 2020, few Somalis see evidence of that assistance because Somali partner organizations hide their American ties to avoid Shabab reprisals. Even bags of American food aid do not carry a U.S. logo.

In contrast, Turkey donates less money but spends it on high-profile projects — new roads, mosques and hospitals — that are promoted with the Turkish flag. Turkey is hugely popular in Somalia.

The American aversion to casualties among U.S. personnel has created an unusually high dependence on private contractors. The best known, Bancroft, hires retired soldiers largely from Eastern Europe, Africa and the French Foreign Legion to recruit and train Somali forces. Bancroft's property wing built the fortresslike Mogadishu embassy and leases it to the State Department; a senior official said it is among the most expensive to operate in Africa.

Bancroft's financial practices came under scrutiny this year when the government examined its \$33 million contract to train Danab and African Union troops.

In a [report published in July](#), the State Department Inspector General said the department had paid Bancroft \$4.1 million for expenses that were not authorized under its contract, including \$3.78 million in "incentive compensation" for its personnel — and said the money should be recovered.

In an email Mr. Stock, the Bancroft C.E.O., denied any wrongdoing.

The C.I.A., meanwhile, is struggling to keep its distance from a political storm surrounding a key ally, the Somali spymaster, Fahad Yasin.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, backed by Mr. Yasin, postponed an election that was supposed to be held in February, extending his term. Critics accused him of a blatant power grab and rival [security factions exchanged gunfire](#) in central Mogadishu, evoking fears that the country's fragile transition to democracy was collapsing.

American officials proposed slapping sanctions on Mr. Yasin to force him to back down, two Western officials said. But the C.I.A. staunchly opposed the idea, apparently to protect its counterterrorism interests.

It sent the wrong signal to Somali officials about America's priorities, one of the officials said: "They see the mouth and the body doing two different things. It's confusing."

### **Biden's choice**

Current U.S. officials say missteps by the Trump administration complicated the situation in Somalia. The Biden administration is mulling whether to send back some of the troops Mr. Trump withdrew in January. Critics of that approach say that Al Shabab are principally focused on East Africa and that their ability to strike in the United States has been overblown.

"If it ever was to pose an existential threat to the U.S. it's because our presence in Somalia made it so," said Captain Rohrbach, the active-duty SEAL.

U.S. officials say the experience of Afghanistan shows that success cannot be defined as remaking a government or society, and that the mission in Somalia has paid off by disrupting Al Shabab. Mr. Goodboe, according to friends, judged his work by a similar yardstick: whether terrorists could threaten Americans or the United States.

Still, some analysts say the United States needs to contemplate a totally new approach in Somalia, including a political settlement with Al Shabab, or face the prospect of being trapped in another "forever war" with an inglorious end.

A memorial wall at C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va., honors agency employees killed in the line of duty. It has 137 stars — [four of them added last May](#). Though the identity of those four officers remains classified, one was Mr. Goodboe — a final, anonymous tribute.

"Engineer Ismail" is believed to be still at large. In the latest Shabab bomb attack, on Sept. 25, a suicide bomber hit a checkpoint in downtown Mogadishu, a few hundred yards from the presidential villa. Eight people were killed, including a woman and two children.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Potential terrorists ahead of COP26</b>  |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19669124.cop26-glasgow-potential-terrorists-monitored/">https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19669124.cop26-glasgow-potential-terrorists-monitored/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>Hundreds of potential terrorists are being closely monitored for any sign they could attack COP26, according to reports.</p> <p>More than 800 potential terrorists are reportedly 'being watched' ahead of the conference, which kicks off next week, with military intelligence expert Philip Ingram telling the <a href="#">Sunday Mail</a> that the summit will be a "very ripe target" for terrorists with "high potential" for an attack.</p> <p>Delegates including US President Joe Biden will attend the conference in Glasgow from next week. "It will not just attract Islamist terrorists, it's good for right-wing terrorists, the extreme left and for eco-terrorists – it is a big target, a very ripe target, and the potential for an attack is high," Ingram told the <a href="#">Sunday Mail</a>.</p> <p>"From the contingency planning perspective, this will be beyond the capability of Police <a href="#">Scotland</a>. In the background, you will have the security service with surge capability.</p> <p>"Anyone on the terror watchlist – as of today there are probably 800 active investigations into people who could be preparing attacks – the security service will have maximum capability to watch for any indications they might be moving towards threatening COP26.</p> <p>"Backing that up there will be support from the MoD, with special forces allocated to reinforce the police."</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | Police Scotland Assistant Chief Constable Bernard Higgins told the Sunday Mail: "There is no specific threat. We have a number of mitigations in place as well as contingency plans we can implement immediately if required." |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/24 Uganda: Kampala bar bomb attack kills 1</b>  |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59028210">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59028210</a>   |
| GIST                          | <p>One person has been killed and three others injured in a bomb attack in Uganda's capital, Kampala.</p> <p>The explosion happened at a bar on Saturday night, killing a 20-year-old waitress and scattering panicked revellers on to the street outside.</p> <p>Three suspected bombers disguised themselves as customers before planting the explosives under a table, police say.</p> <p>The Islamic State group (IS) later said it was behind the attack.</p> <p>The explosion comes one week after the UK government issued an alert about terrorism in Uganda.</p> <p>It warned British citizens in the East African country - where attacks of this kind are rare - that "terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks". It advised them to be vigilant at public places, including restaurants and bars.</p> <p>Police have cordoned off the scene of the blast - a venue popular for roasted pork and beer in a largely residential area on the city's outskirts.</p> <p>A local mayor told the BBC the community were fearful and wondered why anyone would target their neighbourhood.</p> <p>Police spokesman Fred Enanga said the bombers ordered food and drinks at the bar, before placing a plastic bag under a table. The explosion went off moments after they left.</p> <p>Investigators have found nails, ball bearings and other metal fragments, Mr Enanga added, suggesting the explosion was caused by an improvised explosive device.</p> <p>Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni said on Twitter that the blast was a terrorist act and promised to catch the perpetrators.</p> <p>"The public should not fear, we shall defeat this criminality like we have defeated all the other criminality committed by the pigs who don't respect life," he said.</p> <p>In 2010, 74 people were killed in bomb blasts that went off at venues in Kampala where football fans were watching the screening of the World Cup final. The masterminds of the attacks, from the Islamist militant group al-Shabab, are serving life sentences.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 German court sentences IS woman 10yrs</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://apnews.com/article/europe-middle-east-war-crimes-iraq-islamic-state-group-13b67296952d78bdf6f9073aa0bcbe35">https://apnews.com/article/europe-middle-east-war-crimes-iraq-islamic-state-group-13b67296952d78bdf6f9073aa0bcbe35</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>BERLIN (AP) — A German convert to Islam was sentenced to 10 years in prison Monday on charges that, as a member of the extremist Islamic State group in Iraq, she allowed a 5-year-old Yazidi girl she and her husband kept as a slave to die of thirst in the hot sun.</p> <p>The Higher Regional Court in Munich convicted the 30-year-old, identified only as Jennifer W. in line with privacy rules, of — among other things — membership of a terrorist organization abroad, aiding and</p> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>abetting attempted murder, attempted war crimes and crimes against humanity, German news agency dpa reported.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors had accused the woman, from Lohne in Lower Saxony, of standing by in Iraq as her then-husband chained the young Yazidi girl in a courtyard and left her to die of thirst.</p> <p>The child was “defenseless and helplessly exposed to the situation,” judge Joachim Baier said on Monday, adding that W. “had to reckon from the beginning that the child, who was tied up in the heat of the sun, was in danger of dying”.</p> <p>However, she had done nothing to help the girl — although this had been “possible and reasonable” for her, Baier said, according to dpa.</p> <p>W. grew up as a Protestant but converted to Islam in 2013.</p> <p>German media reported that she made her way to Iraq through Turkey and Syria in 2014 to join the IS. In 2015, as a member of the extremist group’s “morality police,” she patrolled parks in Fallujah and Mosul, armed with an assault rifle and a pistol as well as an explosive vest and looking for women who did not conform with its strict codes of behavior and dress, prosecutors said.</p> <p>She was taken into custody while trying to renew her identity papers at the German embassy in Ankara in 2016, and deported back to Germany.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>HEADLINE</b>               | <b>10/25 Houthi boat attacks pose Red Sea threat</b>   |
| <b>SOURCE</b>                 | <a href="https://www.arabnews.com/node/1954616/middle-east">https://www.arabnews.com/node/1954616/middle-east</a>  |
| <b>GIST</b>                   | <p>DUBAI: The Houthi militia’s planned attacks using explosive-rigged boats in the Red Sea pose a threat to global maritime trade lines in the area, Yemen’s information, culture and tourism minister Moammar Al-Eryani warned.</p> <p>The Arab coalition earlier said it destroyed four Houthi boats loaded with explosives during an airstrike in Yemen’s western province of Hodeidah.</p> <p>The vessels were being prepared to attack ships sailing through the Red Sea.</p> <p>“The coalition efforts have contributed to protecting shipping lanes and international trade in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait and south of (the) Red Sea,” the coalition said in a statement.</p> <p>Al-Eryani also called on the international community as well as the UN and US envoys to Yemen to condemn the Houthis’ terroristic actions, which were aimed to destabilize regional and international security and maritime navigation.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the KSrelief Center’s Demining Project in Yemen (MASAM) has defused 1,500 landmines and unexploded ordnances in the past week.</p> <p>MASAM’s technical teams managed to remove 6 anti-personnel, 1,067 anti-tanks landmines, 483 unexploded explosive ordnances and one explosive device.</p> <p>The landmines were rigged by Houthi fighters in different parts of Yemen, the center said.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | 10/25 Lost hiker ignored calls; unknown number   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/26/hiker-lost-on-us-mountain-ignored-calls-from-rescuers-because-he-didnt-recognise-the-number">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/26/hiker-lost-on-us-mountain-ignored-calls-from-rescuers-because-he-didnt-recognise-the-number</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>A man who became lost for 24 hours while hiking on Colorado's highest mountain ignored repeated phone calls from rescue teams because they came from an unknown number, authorities say.</p> <p>The hiker was reported missing around 8pm on 18 October after failing to return to where he was staying, Lake county search and rescue said.</p> <p>Repeated attempts to contact the man through calls, texts and voicemail messages went ignored, according to a <a href="#">statement</a> released by the agency.</p> <p>Five rescue team members were deployed at around 10pm to search "high probability areas" on from Mount Elbert but returned around 3am the following morning after failing to locate the missing hiker on the 4401 metre-high (14,440ft) peak.</p> <p>A second team set out at 7am the next day to search areas where hikers "typically lose the trail" only to discover the man had returned back to his place of lodging about 9:30am.</p> <p>The hiker told authorities he had lost his way around nightfall and "bounced around on to different trails trying to locate the proper trailhead" before finally reaching his car the next morning, about 24 hours after setting out on the hike.</p> <p>Lake county search and rescue said the man reported having "no idea" anyone was out looking for him.</p> <p>"One notable take-away is that the subject ignored repeated phone calls from us because they didn't recognise the number," the agency added.</p> <p>"If you're overdue according to your itinerary, and you start getting repeated calls from an unknown number, please answer the phone; it may be a search and rescue team trying to confirm you're safe!"</p> <p>More than 32 hours were dedicated to the search. News that the hiker had ignored calls from rescuers prompted a flurry of furious responses from members of the public.</p> <p>"Please remember that what seems like common sense in hindsight is not obvious to a subject in the moment when they are lost and panicking," Lake county search and rescue responded over a Facebook post.</p> <p>"In Colorado, most folks who spend time outdoors have a good understanding of the search and rescue infrastructure that is there to help them, but this is not the case nation-wide."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 Fentanyl-induced ODs increasing   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/fentanyl-induced-overdoses-increasing-more-drugs-being-laced-with-it">https://www.q13fox.com/news/fentanyl-induced-overdoses-increasing-more-drugs-being-laced-with-it</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>AUSTIN, Texas - Fentanyl-induced overdoses are increasing, and more types of drugs are being laced with it, according to local experts.</p> <p>In September, the <a href="#">Drug Enforcement Administration issued a Public Safety Alert</a> for the first time in six years warning Americans of an increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl.</p> <p>Last week, the family of UT linebacker <a href="#">Jake Ehlinger</a> announced that he had died back in May from an <a href="#">accidental overdose</a> of what was believed to be Xanax laced with fentanyl.</p> <p>"Here at UT this is something that we've really been so concerned about," said Claire Zagorski, program coordinator for the Pharmacy Addiction Research and Medicine Program at UT's College of Pharmacy.</p> |



"This used to be something that was fairly well contained to just heroin, but now we're seeing fentanyl working its way into cocaine and into counterfeit pills and tablets."

For Chrissy Glenn and Robin Lindeman, it's something they've seen firsthand working at an addiction treatment center.

"Over the last two years the increase of overdoses that we've seen have mostly been related to fentanyl," said Lindeman, executive director for [Infinite Recovery](#).

There are a few potential reasons for this uptick. Drug dealers may be motivated to lace their product with fentanyl because its potency can create stronger addicts, and therefore, loyal customers. It is also cheaper to cut drugs with it.

"A semi-truck full of heroin, in terms of potency, could be replaced by a briefcase-size amount of fentanyl," said Zagorski. "That right there is a huge economic benefit if you're moving or selling drugs." In other cases, it may be an accidental contamination by a drug dealer.

"If they're cutting their heroin with fentanyl and they brush the table off, and they don't brush every single part of those fentanyl particles off, and they put Xanax on the table, the Xanax can get laced with fentanyl," said Lindeman.

Fentanyl's potency is what makes it so dangerous to often unsuspecting consumers. "Fentanyl is an extremely powerful synthetic opioid," said Lindeman. "I'm talking 100 times more potent than morphine."

#### **CDC report: Drug overdose deaths hit record high in 2020**

The CDC is reporting a roughly 30 percent increase in drug overdose deaths from 2019 to 2020, a new record high.

It's something the Travis County Sheriff's Office is very much aware of as well. They equip all of their deputies with Narcan, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose. They also provide Narcan for inmates to have on hand when they are released.

"This is a problem that's not in just one area of [Travis County](#), it's not in just one age group, one demographic, or one economic area," said Kristen Dark, public information officer for the Travis County Sheriff's Office. "It's terrifying to think that a teenager who's stressed out by exams could purchase one pill thinking it's a Xanax, and it's actually laced with fentanyl that can kill."

At UT Austin, that's the message they're trying to get across to students. "At this point, if you have a pill or a friend offers you a pill at a party or to study with, unless you know that that pill came from a pharmacy, you're taking a big gamble by using it," said Zagorski.

One resource available for UT students is a [program called SHIFT](#). The overall goal of the program is to shift the culture and discussion around drug use on campus.

There are also resources for Texans who would like to have Narcan on hand. [More Narcan Please](#) and [The Texas Overdose and Naloxone Initiative](#) can provide free naloxone on request.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Spotted beluga whale likely from Arctic   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/beluga-whale-in-puget-sound-likely-from-beaufort-sea/281-26be71e8-368b-4879-976c-f79c70041384">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/beluga-whale-in-puget-sound-likely-from-beaufort-sea/281-26be71e8-368b-4879-976c-f79c70041384</a> |
| GIST     | The beluga whale seen in Puget Sound earlier this month is likely from the Beaufort Sea, part of the Arctic Ocean north of Alaska, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).   |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>The <a href="#">beluga whale was reported for the first time</a> in Puget Sound the week of Oct. 3. The only previously documented sighting of a beluga whale in Puget Sound came in 1940 near Point Defiance.</p> <p>NOAA scientists were able to pinpoint the whale's origin from analyzing genetic material collected from whale. The material, known as "environmental DNA," or eDNA, comes from skin, fecal, or other cellular debris found in the environment near the animal, the NOAA said.</p> <p>Scientists said the genetic material collected most closely matches other beluga whales from the Beaufort Sea and high Arctic. Scientists originally thought the whale may have been from the small and endangered Cook Inlet beluga population near Anchorage, Alaska.</p> <p>The Beaufort Sea beluga population was estimated at about 40,000 whales in 1992. The NOAA said beluga whales are known to occasionally roam beyond their usual range. The Beaufort Sea population migrates between the United States, Canada and Russia.</p> <p>Earlier this month, NOAA said the beluga whale appears "<a href="#">thin, but not emaciated</a>." The whale was last sighted on Oct. 20 near Tacoma, according to the NOAA.</p> <p>The West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network is prepared to respond if the whale becomes stranded, the NOAA said.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Iran delaying talks for nuclear program?</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20211025-u-s-iran-envoy-tehran-may-be-delaying-talks-to-advance-nuclear-program">https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20211025-u-s-iran-envoy-tehran-may-be-delaying-talks-to-advance-nuclear-program</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The top U.S. envoy on Iran says talks to revive the moribund the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers are at a "critical phase," warning that Iran may be engaging in delaying tactics to advance its nuclear program.</p> <p>Rob Malley made the comments on October 25 as the top European diplomat coordinating international talks to revive the agreement is set to meet with his Iranian counterpart in Brussels this week for discussions on restarting the negotiations over the accord.</p> <p>Speaking after a weeklong trip to European and Gulf Arab nations, Malley told reporters that the window of opportunity to negotiate a return to the Iran nuclear deal "will not be open forever."</p> <p>"At some point, the JCPOA will have been so eroded because Iran would have made advances that cannot be reversed," Malley said, referring to the deal formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.</p> <p>Former President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the international accord in 2018 and reimposed harsh sanctions, despite Iran's compliance with the deal. In response, Tehran has gradually breached limits imposed by the pact, including on uranium enrichment, refining it to higher purity, and installing advanced centrifuges.</p> <p>President Joe Biden came to office offering to revive the deal, but six rounds of indirect talks with Iran in Vienna that began in April failed to reach agreement. The talks were paused in June after Iran's presidential election that brought hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi to power.</p> <p>The main sticking points center around Tehran's demand for a broad lifting of U.S. sanctions and technical details about how Tehran will return to compliance. In recent months, there have been repeated delays as EU mediators and Iran discuss the terms of a return to negotiations, but no concrete date has been agreed.</p> <p>While time is running thin for Iran and the United States to resume compliance, Malley stressed that the Washington is interested in diplomacy even as it has "other options" to prevent Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Meanwhile, Iran’s top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani tweeted that he will be in Brussels on October 27 “to continue our talks on result-oriented negotiations.”</p> <p>“Iran is determined to engage in negotiations that would remove unlawful and cruel sanctions in a full and effective manner, secure normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran, and provide credible guarantees for no further renegeing (by the United States),” he also wrote.</p> <p>EU spokesman Peter Stano said the meeting would involve EU envoy Enrique Mora, who visited Tehran earlier this month to push Iran to restart full negotiations.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Sammamish named ‘best small city in US’</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/local/seattlenews/article/sammamish-wa-named-best-small-city-in-the-us-2021-16563202.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/local/seattlenews/article/sammamish-wa-named-best-small-city-in-the-us-2021-16563202.php</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>For the second year in a row, the <a href="#">King County</a> city of Sammamish was named <a href="#">the best small city in the U.S. by Wallethub</a>, a personal finance website that generates rankings for a number of American institutions.</p> <p>The 24-square-mile city averaged the best score among Wallethub’s five ranking criteria: affordability, economic health, education and health, quality of life, and safety. Its highest rank — it placed third out of 1,322 small cities — came in the economic health category, which looked at a city’s unemployment rate, median credit score and the number of people living in poverty, among other things.</p> <p>To make the list, a city’s population had to be between 25,000 and 100,000.</p> <p>Sammamish also earned high marks in safety (30), education and health (57), and affordability (178). Its lowest score was in quality of life (1,228). To rank cities by that metric, researchers looked at a city’s number of amenities — things like restaurants, bars, movie theaters, coffee shops, gyms and parks — and the average number of hours residents work per week, among other things.</p> <p>To determine which small cities were the best, Wallethub looked at their rankings in each category and assigned them a final score. Sammamish received the highest, with 72.55. It was followed closely by Carmel, Indiana, which received a final score of 71.79.</p> <p>Several other Washington cities — including Redmond, Bothell, Kirkland, Walla Walla, Olympia, Lacey, Pullman, Pasco, SeaTac, Yakima, Burien, Spanaway, Lakewood, Longview, Graham, Spokane Valley, Auburn and Maple Valley — made the list as well. The closest to Sammamish was Redmond, which received a score of 70.12 and was ranked as the 12th best small city in the U.S.</p> <p>Sammamish also placed first in <a href="#">Wallethub’s 2020 rankings</a>. Redmond was the 10th best small city in the U.S. on last year’s list.</p> <p>Located on a plateau, Sammamish is situated on the shores and hilly terrain east of Lake Sammamish. It is bordered to the south by Issaquah, to the northwest by Redmond, and to the west by Bellevue, which sits across Lake Sammamish. Its 2019 population was estimated to be just south of 66,000.</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 China remakes mosques more ‘Chinese’</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.npr.org/2021/10/24/1047054983/china-muslims-sinicization">https://www.npr.org/2021/10/24/1047054983/china-muslims-sinicization</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>XINING, China — The Dongguan Mosque has adopted some very different looks in its nearly 700 years in China’s northwestern city of Xining. Built in the style of a Chinese imperial palace, with tiled roofs and no domes, and adorned with Buddhist symbols, the mosque was nearly destroyed by neglect during political tumult in the early 20th century. In the 1990s, authorities replaced the original ceramic tiles on the roof and minarets with green domes.</p> |

This year, provincial authorities lopped off those domes.

"The government says they want us to 'sinify' our mosques, so they look more like Beijing's Tiananmen Square," says Ali, a Muslim farmer selling pomegranates outside the mosque. He requested that NPR use only his first name because residents have been ordered not to speak about the dome removals. "I think the mosque looks good either way, but what say do we have anyways?"

China is removing the domes and minarets from thousands of mosques across the country. Authorities say the domes are evidence of foreign religious influence and are taking down overtly Islamic architecture as part of a push to sinicize historically Muslim ethnic groups — to make them more traditionally Chinese.

The campaign comes amid rising Islamophobia in China and growing religious restrictions, touching off a discussion across the country among scholars, ethnic policy regulators and historically Muslim Chinese communities about what exactly should be considered "Chinese" to begin with.

### **China's approach to ethnic minorities has shifted to "sinicization" under Xi Jinping's rule**

China's ethnic policy is directly modeled on the Soviet approach, classifying citizens into 55 distinct ethnic minority groups, each of which, in theory, is granted limited cultural autonomy within its territory. But experts say the Communist Party under Xi Jinping's rule [has shifted](#) to a new approach, [one that favors integration and assimilation](#) — a process dubbed "sinicization" in official speeches and documents.

"A very liberal or positive view of all this [sinicization] is just basically to compare it to, say, what's it like to become an American citizen? You accommodate and people adjust," says [Dru Gladney](#), an expert on Islam in China at Pomona College.

After more than 1,300 years of living and intermarrying in China, Hui Muslims — who [number](#) about 10.5 million, less than 1% of China's population — have adjusted by becoming culturally and linguistically Chinese. They even made their version of Islam accessible to Confucians and Daoists — trying to show it as inherently Chinese and not a foreign influence — by adopting spiritual concepts and terms found in ancient Chinese philosophy [to explain Islamic precepts](#).

Various Hui sects have also incorporated Chinese religious practices into their worship, such as burning incense at religious ceremonies. Hui communities in central Henan [province are even known for their female-only and female-led mosques](#), believed to be a uniquely long tradition in China.

The problem from Chinese authorities' perspective, says Gladney, is that the Hui are not Chinese in the way sinicization proponents want: "When people make this one-way argument of sinicization, I think they're confusing that with Han-ization" — in other words, making Chinese Muslims more like China's Han ethnic majority.

Beijing has a much narrower understanding of what being "Chinese" means — adhering to Communist Party values, speaking only Mandarin Chinese and rejecting all foreign influence, say scholars.

"The Communists nowadays try to culturally rule China," says [Ma Haiyun](#), an associate history professor at Frostburg University.

### **Authorities began taking down mosque domes a few years ago in an effort to remove "Saudi and Arabic influence"**

The streets of Xining city in China's Qinghai province are redolent with reminders of China's historically multiethnic and co-religious composition. Many people wear the white cap or scarf favored by Hui Muslims, and visitors are equally likely to hear Mandarin Chinese as the Tibetan spoken by about a fifth of Qinghai's population. Roughly one-sixth of the province's population belongs to ethnic groups China classifies as Muslim.

At the heart of the city's hustle and bustle is the Dongguan Mosque, Xining's largest. In restaurants that crowd the alleyways around the mosque, vendors hand-pull halal [beef soup](#) noodles. Carts piled with dates and almonds cluster under brick archways.

But missing are the big green domes that once crowned its minarets and prayer hall. Under the slogan of "removing Saudi and Arabic influence," authorities have [torn down the domes](#) from most mosques across China's northwest as part of a national removal campaign that began in earnest in 2018.

Xi first called for sinicization in 2016. In August, he [gave a speech](#) saying religious and ethnic groups should "hold high the banner of Chinese unity" — meaning they should put Chinese culture ahead of ethnic differences.

The dome removal campaign has met with [limited public resistance](#). Xining residents say the Dongguan Mosque's imam and director were briefly detained and forced to sign in favor of it. Less than a mile away, Xining's marble [Nanguan Mosque](#) is also being prepped for dome removal. A shell of bamboo scaffolding encases its white dome.

"The local residents are spreading rumors," said a man who declined to identify himself and tried to prevent NPR from taking pictures outside the mosque. Despite the removal of the Dongguan Mosque's domes, he insists they are still in place. "Dongguan's and Nanguan's domes are preserved. Some might have been taken down for renovation."

In other parts of China, sinicization has allowed the state to justify the confiscation of mosque assets, the imprisonment of imams and the closure of [religious institutions](#) over the last two years.

It has also buttressed simultaneous restrictions on the use of non-Chinese languages, such as [Tibetan](#) or [Uyghur](#). In the province of Inner Mongolia, peaceful [mass protests broke out](#) last September but were quickly stifled after schools reduced the time devoted to teaching the Mongolian language in favor of Mandarin Chinese.

China's efforts at cultural control are most heavy-handed in the western region of Xinjiang, where authorities [detained](#) hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uyghurs in camps Beijing says are schools that teach the Chinese language and Chinese communist theory. The state has also [damaged or outright demolished](#) thousands of Xinjiang mosques and religious sites.

### **Hui Muslims continue to adapt**

The dome removal at Xining's Dongguan Mosque has split China's already fractious Muslim community, which is prone to sectarian divisions, according to Frostburg's Ma, who was born in Xining and was raised around the mosque.

"If you remodel this mosque and create some chaos [among the Muslim community]. You already have different sects starting to rise in Xining ... I think the government is trying to divide and rule," says Ma.

The state itself is also divided over what Chinese mosques should look like.

In the 1990s, as China opened up politically, local leaders encouraged Persian Gulf states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to invest money into massive infrastructure projects aimed at internationalizing the once-closed Communist country. More Chinese Muslim students were able to study abroad in Middle Eastern countries, especially in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, and they brought back new ideas about Islamic architecture.

As part of these modernization efforts, authorities also tore down centuries-old Chinese-style mosque roofs— including the ones which graced the Dongguan Mosque — and built Arabic-style domes.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>In previous conversations Gladney had with local governments intent on adding domes to old Chinese mosques, "I was jumping up and down, saying, 'don't do it, don't do it,'" he says. "You can build your dome and your new mosque next door, but preserve what you have here."</p> <p>The Hui Muslims, for the most part, have accommodated the ever-changing cultural pressures around them.</p> <p>Yusuf, the Muslim owner of a store near the Dongguan Mosque selling Muslim head coverings and halal beauty products, says the Hui must continue to adapt, as they have for centuries, to survive. He requested that NPR only use one name because residents may face state retribution for speaking about religious affairs with foreign journalists.</p> <p>"Everything changes from one era to another. During Chairman Mao's time, they tore down all our mosques. Then they built them up. Now they are tearing them down again! Just follow whatever political slogan the country is yelling at the time."</p> <p>For the third time in under a century, the Dongguan Mosque is going through another makeover — and that's fine with Yusuf.</p> <p>"To the average person, Chinese style, Arabic style... we don't care! Our faith does not exist in our buildings. It lies in our heart," he says, thumping his chest emphatically.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Taiwan military stand against China?</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-military-readiness-china-threat-us-defense-11635174187?mod=hp_lead_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-military-readiness-china-threat-us-defense-11635174187?mod=hp_lead_pos5</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The concern that China might try to seize Taiwan is preoccupying American military planners and administration officials. Few of them think Taiwan's military could hold the line.</p> <p>Soldiers, strategists and government officials in Taiwan and the U.S. say the island's military is riven with internal problems, many of which have built up over years of calm and economic prosperity and now are <a href="#">eating away at Taiwan's ability to deter China</a>.</p> <p>Among the most pressing concerns are poor preparation and low morale among the roughly 80,000 Taiwanese who are conscripted each year and the nearly 2.2 million reservists.</p> <p>Xiao Cheng-zhi, a 26-year-old from central Taiwan, said his four months of basic training that ended last year mainly involved sweeping leaves, moving spare tires and pulling weeds. Aside from some marksmanship training, he said, his classes were meaningless.</p> <p>Mr. Xiao dismissed his cohorts as strawberry soldiers, a term used in Taiwan to describe young people raised by overprotective parents who bruise easily. While he said he is willing to serve, he doubted the island would stand much chance against China's People's Liberation Army.</p> <p>China's Communist Party considers Taiwan part of its territory despite never having ruled it. Although there is no sign of imminent conflict, Beijing has made clear it intends to <a href="#">bring Taiwan under its control eventually</a>.</p> <p>In interviews, Taiwanese soldiers and reservists expressed concerns about training and readiness. One said he watched American war movies during training after running out of useful things to do. Another said he spent a lot of time reading and drawing, and that there wasn't much to worry about anyway. Public opinion polls and interviews suggest many Taiwanese expect the U.S. to take charge if serious danger arises.</p> |



Two young men described how they had put on extra weight to get disqualified from military conscription, a practice some Taiwanese youths say is common. One said he stuffed himself with large meals every four hours for a month, including McDonald's combo meals, to gain enough pounds to be exempted.

Grant Newsham, a retired U.S. Marines colonel who spent 2019 in Taiwan studying the island's defenses, said Taiwan has a solid core of well-trained troops and "superb officers that are ready to fight." Other military experts compare Taiwan's top pilots and officers to the world's best.

But the Taiwanese military is underfunded, and its reserves system is a shambles, Mr. Newsham said. It needs improved pay packages, and it could become far more effective by training with the U.S. and its allies, he said.

Taiwan's government acknowledges many of the weaknesses and says it is working to fix them. A government watchdog agency said in a July report that some reservists have a " 'just passing through' mentality," and called for better training using technology such as virtual reality.

An unpublished government report commissioned by Taiwan's defense ministry, which was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, found a culture of paperwork that cut into combat training. It said "endless misconduct and mismanagement" had weakened young people's willingness to join the forces.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense didn't respond to requests for comments. The president's office said it doesn't comment on military matters.

Last month, Taiwan's defense ministry made changes to its mandatory military training, saying all incoming conscripts will be sent to combat units for more hands-on experience.

Concerns about Taiwan's readiness have intensified as China flexes its muscles, with a [surge in military flights near the island](#) and the [crushing of democracy in Hong Kong](#).

On Oct. 9, Chinese President Xi Jinping [called for "peaceful reunification" with Taiwan](#). China's leaders say the use of force remains an option.

Adding to unease among Taiwanese and U.S. officials are major investments by China's armed forces. With a military budget 13 times the size of Taiwan's, China now has more than one million ground troops, according to Pentagon estimates. Taiwan's military has shrunk to 187,660 active-duty soldiers, from 275,000 in 2011.

This year, China put into service its first ship capable of launching armored troop-carriers, hovercraft and helicopters for amphibious assaults. It held drills simulating sea crossings and beach landings, and has fielded rocket artillery systems with the range to strike Taiwanese targets, according to [Pentagon reports](#).

Taiwan still has some advantages, including a tricky coastline that would be hard for PLA forces to swarm. Also, there are doubts about battle-readiness in China, which hasn't fought a war since a brief conflict with Vietnam in 1979.

An annual Taiwanese defense ministry assessment of China's military, reviewed by the Journal, warns that Beijing could use cyberattacks to paralyze Taiwan's command centers. A crippling of defense infrastructure could increase the reliance on Taiwanese soldiers to prevent a rapid takeover.

Taiwan's defense minister, Chiu Kuo-cheng, said recently the PLA [would be able to launch a full-blown attack on Taiwan with minimal losses by 2025](#).

### **U.S. dilemma**

The U.S. hasn't committed to defend Taiwan, but most military analysts assume it would.

Last Thursday, President Biden said twice during a CNN town hall event that the U.S. would defend Taiwan, but [the White House said later there was no change to U.S. policy](#).

Currently, the U.S. maintains a policy of “strategic ambiguity,” in which it aims to prevent conflict by declining to say what it would do if clashes break out. Some U.S. foreign-policy experts want the U.S. to explicitly commit to intervene if China attacks Taiwan. Others worry that even small gestures by Washington could provoke Beijing and entangle the U.S. in foreign trouble.

For now, the U.S. supports Taiwan mainly by [selling it weapons and other defense equipment](#). For at least a year, the U.S. [has sent small contingents of Special Forces and Marines](#) to help train ground troops and maritime forces. The U.S. defense policy bill this year calls for closer cooperation.

Some military strategists have suggested Taiwan needs to become more like Israel. Despite having less than half of Taiwan’s population, Israel spends nearly \$22 billion on defense annually, compared with \$13 billion by Taiwan last year. Young Israeli men are required to serve 2½ years, while women must spend nearly two years.

Taiwan used to require about two years of mandatory service for men. It now requires four months. After that, they become reservists, with some, though not all, called up again every one or two years for a refresher course that usually lasts five to seven days. The period will be extended to two weeks beginning next year. Plans to phase out conscription entirely have been stalled by difficulties in attracting volunteers.

Current and former U.S. officials and military analysts say Taiwan must spend more on weapons such as sea mines and coastal cruise missiles that would better deter an amphibious invasion. That might allow it to beat back an invasion for a few days, providing time for the U.S. to come to its defense or for it to impose enough casualties to force a rethink in Beijing.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has tried to rally the public behind improving the military, while pushing initiatives such as building more naval ships and missiles in Taiwan. A new agency to oversee a revamp of military reserve forces is launching in early 2022.

Military spending has risen, though it remains unpopular with some Taiwanese. Last month, the government [proposed an \\$8.7 billion special budget](#) for missiles, naval ships and other weapon systems, on top of annual spending set to grow 4% in 2022 to a record \$15.1 billion.

### **Chiang Kai-shek’s legacy**

Ronan Fu, a former second lieutenant at the Taiwanese Reserve Command and assistant research fellow at the Institute of Political Science at Academia Sinica, a state-funded think tank, questions whether young people have a strong enough sense of duty. While training has improved somewhat recently, he said, “adult men in Taiwan don’t actually want to fight.”

A 2019 survey found around half of Taiwanese would be willing to fight to defend the island, but polls also show most don’t expect they will ever have to.

Many young Taiwanese view the military as a legacy of Taiwan’s authoritarian past. The island’s military grew out of the armed forces led by former Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, who lost to Mao Zedong’s Communist forces in the Chinese Civil War. In the late 1940s, Chiang’s forces fled to Taiwan, where his party imposed martial law.

After Taiwan became a democracy, its military began recruiting volunteers to replace conscripts. With better salaries available in the corporate sector, recruiting proved challenging. In 2018, the defense ministry said it would adopt a hybrid model combining volunteers with the conscripts now obligated to serve four months.

“There is no profession or any professional knowledge that you could master within four months,” said Wang Yi, an officer in Taiwan’s Army Aviation and Special Forces Command.

Harry Goo, a 31-year-old film producer in Taipei, said he was willing to fight to prevent “Taiwan becoming like Hong Kong.” When called up for military service in 2012, though, he took what he said was a local government officer’s advice to rapidly gain weight to avoid conscription. His father told him to get a job rather than wasting time in the military, he said.

Recruitment also has been undermined by the view that China wouldn’t invade because it would be too damaging for its international standing, or because nations such as the U.S. would intervene.

“If China dares to make any trouble, wouldn’t the rest of the world issue sanctions against it?” said Ian Su, a 25-year-old insurance broker from the central county of Changhua who trained as a signal operator last year.

Some Taiwanese and American military officials and analysts say Taiwan needs to develop a commitment to civil self-defense, such as in Finland and Switzerland.

Enoch Wu, a former Taiwanese corporal who now heads the ruling party’s Taipei chapter, is leading an effort to promote civil defense through speeches and workshops. He said there needs to be more acceptance that Taiwan must prepare for a Chinese attack.

During annual military exercises last month, Charley Su and his girlfriend, Lucia Chang, both 29, came to watch jet fighters landing on a provincial highway as part of a contingency exercise if airport runways were destroyed.

“Our hard-fought freedom is not for granted,” said Mr. Su, who works in construction. Many in Taiwan don’t realize how fragile its liberty is, he said, because “the military is so far away from the people.”

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | 10/24 How dangerous US film sets?   |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/10/24/how-dangerous-film-sets-alec-baldwin-shooting/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/10/24/how-dangerous-film-sets-alec-baldwin-shooting/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The death of a cinematographer who was <a href="#">shot with a prop gun by actor Alec Baldwin on the set</a> of the movie “Rust” is sparking new calls for better workplace safety during film production — in an industry in which on-set deaths are rare but cast and crew are often exposed to dangerous situations.</p> <p>Baldwin’s shooting of Halyna Hutchins has left many in the industry wondering how such an incident could occur, given the precautions usually taken by film professionals and unions, and some state lawmakers are seeking to redress this.</p> <p>California state Sen. Dave Cortese (D), who has worked on the issue of safe gun storage, said in a statement Saturday that he would introduce legislation banning “live ammunition, and firearms that are capable of firing live ammunition, from movie sets and theatrical productions” in the state.</p> <p>“There is an urgent need to address alarming work abuses and safety violations occurring on the set of theatrical productions, including unnecessary high-risk conditions such as the use of live firearms,” said Cortese, adding that the entertainment hub should lead the way in making film and television sets safer for crews.</p> <p>“Those working behind the scenes to entertain and bring joy to millions all over the world shouldn’t go to set worrying if they will return home safely to their family,” he said.</p> <p>Others in the industry said there was no reason for guns to be loaded with blanks — or anything else — on set, given what’s possible in postproduction work. “There’s computers now,” Craig Zobel, a filmmaker known for his work on such productions as the HBO series, “The Mare of Easttown,” <a href="#">wrote</a> on Twitter.</p> |

“The gunshots [on my series] are all digital. You can probably tell, but who cares? It’s an unnecessary risk.”

The [Associated Press](#), in an investigation of accidents on U.S. film and television sets in 2016, found that at least 43 people have died on set since 1990 and more than 150 have suffered life-altering injuries. It tallied at least 37 people who have died in filming accidents outside the United States since 2000 and “many more” who were seriously injured.

On-set deaths have often attracted significant attention. In 1993, actor Brandon Lee — son of martial artist Bruce Lee — was [killed after being shot by a gun that had contained a real bullet](#) while he was filming “The Crow.”

Although that incident bears resemblance to the recent death on the set of “Rust,” a Western, it is not clear what type of projectile killed Hutchins, 42.

But it’s not just guns that can pose safety risks: In 2014, [a camera assistant](#) was killed while an independent movie was being filmed on active train tracks. A helicopter crash in 1982 during the making of “The Twilight Zone: The Movie” killed three actors, including two children, and led the Directors Guild of America to establish a safety committee.

Brooklyn native [stunt woman Joi “SJ” Harris](#) died in 2017 of head trauma while filming “Deadpool 2,” after she was ejected from her motorcycle and into the glass window of a building as she attempted a stunt in Vancouver, according to the British Columbia Coroners Service. WorkSafeBC, the public entity that regulates workplace safety in British Columbia, [fined the movie producer TCF Vancouver Productions](#) \$289,562.63 in Canadian dollars after its investigation concluded that the company failed to ensure Harris’s safety and that of other crew members.

In the United States, rules on the use of firearms in film production have mostly been set by the industry itself, according to the AP, while states regulate who can own a firearm and how licenses are handed out.

California, which has some of the strictest gun ownership laws in the country, created a special “[entertainment firearms permit](#)” that exempts armorers and other professionals handling guns as props from certain restrictions, such as a ban on buying more than one handgun within 30 days.

Some states regulate other dangerous props, such as pyrotechnics, helicopters and drones; others have noise regulations governing gunshots.

The Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee, founded in 1965 and composed of “guild, union, and management representatives active in industry safety and health programs,” has issued safety bulletins about the use of helicopters, cars, stunts and even artificial fog and haze generators.

Films often use computer-generated graphics to mimic real gunshots, though some productions use rubber or other soft materials that can hurt, but not kill, people. Blanks — which contain gunpowder but not a real bullet — are sometimes used to more effectively mirror the effects of shooting a firearm, such as recoil.

Industry guidance about guns loaded with blanks, however, is clear: They are still deadly weapons.

In a nonbinding safety [bulletin](#) from the Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee, the first line warns, in bold, underlined font: “BLANKS CAN KILL.” In 1984, actor Jon-Erik Hexum was [killed](#) by a blank cartridge after he pretended to play Russian roulette, firing the gun at himself at extremely close range.

“Instead of using a bullet, blanks use wads of paper, plastic, felt or cotton,” Christopher Gist and Sarah Mayberry, co-founders of the Australia-based film and television production house Small Cow Productions, wrote [in the Conversation](#), a nonprofit academic outlet.

“This wadding ensures you get a certain level of flame out of the gun,” they add, but it is also “the thing which can cause a lot of injury: just because a gun is using blanks, that doesn’t mean it isn’t dangerous.”

Yet some filmmakers insist on using live prop guns, saying they more closely capture the sound and look of a weapon firing than computer-generated imaging. They say that rules exist to prevent accidents and that those rules are largely effective — if followed.

Jeffrey Harris, a lawyer in Savannah, Ga., who has represented victims of film-set injuries, said that every film set has posted safety bulletins and that proper handling of weapons is always right at the top. If crews follow basic safety precautions — no ammunition allowed, no guns directed at people, redundant checks to ensure chambers and barrels are clear — [“everybody should be fine,” he said.](#)

Blanks are considered fatally dangerous when fired at close range, but not so much at a distance. The circumstances surrounding the “Rust” shooting remain largely unclear, but the death, and injury of a director on the film, raised concerns that the gun had contained a live bullet.

Bill Davis, an experienced film armorer, [told The Washington Post](#) that, based on how blanks work, that was highly likely. That would violate the [industry guidance](#) that live ammunition is “never to be used nor brought” on set.

The guidance includes other basic tenets of gun safety, such as avoiding pointing a gun at anyone, including yourself. “Remember that any object at which you point a firearm could be destroyed,” it warns.

People on set should be at a “safe distance” from the firing area and wear such protective equipment as shields, and eye and hearing protection, the guidance says.

Gist and Mayberry [write in the Conversation](#), “On our set, we all understand making a movie is not worth putting someone’s life or health at risk.”

“This is an issue of workplace safety. When things go fatally wrong in any workplace, it is a tragedy,” they added. “We can only imagine most filmmakers feel the same.”

Working conditions were a major concern for Hollywood crews as their union, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, sought a new contract with producers.

Industry workers have complained about long hours and low pay, and as the Los Angeles Times [reported](#), some of the “Rust” camera crew walked off the set recently to protest long hours and delayed paychecks.

The vice president of IATSE, Mike Miller, noted that an agreement reached last week between the union and producers laid out improvements that would help workers “be more alert.” He added that “health and safety standard have been upgraded.”

According to the AP investigation in 2016, fines imposed on film studios by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration after serious workplace accidents are often “fiercely contested” and that nearly half the ones it reviewed were eventually reduced.

Prosecutions were rarely pursued, the outlet noted, as “most workers are legally barred from suing, and those that do encounter the reluctance of witnesses to come forward for fear of being rendered unemployable in the ultracompetitive entertainment industry.”

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/24 Amazon’s worst human resources problem  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/technology/amazon-employee-leave-errors.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/technology/amazon-employee-leave-errors.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business</a> |

A year ago, Tara Jones, an Amazon warehouse worker in Oklahoma, cradled her newborn, glanced over her pay stub on her phone and noticed that she had been underpaid by a significant chunk: \$90 out of \$540.

The mistake kept repeating even after she reported the issue. Ms. Jones, who had taken accounting classes at community college, grew so exasperated that she wrote an email to Jeff Bezos, the company's founder.

"I'm behind on bills, all because the pay team messed up," she wrote weeks later. "I'm crying as I write this email."

Unbeknown to Ms. Jones, her message to Mr. Bezos set off an internal investigation, and a discovery: Ms. Jones was far from alone. For at least a year and a half — including during periods of record profit — Amazon had been shortchanging new parents, patients dealing with medical crises and other vulnerable workers on leave, according to a confidential report on the findings. Some of the pay calculations at her facility had been wrong since it opened its doors over a year before. As many as 179 of the company's other warehouses had potentially been affected, too.

Amazon is still identifying and repaying workers to this day, according to Kelly Nantel, a company spokeswoman.

That error is only one strand in a longstanding knot of problems with Amazon's system for handling paid and unpaid leaves, according to dozens of interviews and hundreds of pages of internal documents obtained by The New York Times. Together, the records and interviews reveal that the issues have been more widespread — affecting the company's blue-collar and white-collar workers — and more harmful than previously known, amounting to what several company insiders described as one of its gravest human resources problems.

Workers across the country facing medical problems and other life crises have been fired when the attendance software mistakenly marked them as no-shows, according to former and current human resources staff members, some of whom would speak only anonymously for fear of retribution. Doctors' notes vanished into black holes in Amazon's databases. Employees struggled to even reach their case managers, wading through automated phone trees that routed their calls to overwhelmed back-office staff in Costa Rica, India and Las Vegas. And the whole leave system was run on a patchwork of programs that often didn't speak to one another.

Some workers who were ready to return found that the system was too backed up to process them, resulting in weeks or months of lost income. Higher-paid corporate employees, who had to navigate the same systems, found that arranging a routine leave could turn into a morass.

In internal correspondence, company administrators warned of "inadequate service levels," "deficient processes" and systems that are "prone to delay and error."

The extent of the problem puts in stark relief how Amazon's workers routinely took a back seat to customers during the company's meteoric rise to retail dominance. Amazon built cutting-edge package processing facilities to cater to shoppers' appetite for fast delivery, far outpacing competitors. But the business did not devote enough resources and attention to how it served employees, according to many longtime workers.

"A lot of times, because we've optimized for the customer experience, we've been focused on that," Bethany Reyes, who was recently put in charge of fixing the leave system, said in an interview. She stressed that the company was working hard to rebalance those priorities.

The company's treatment of its huge work force — now more than 1.3 million people and expanding rapidly — faces mounting scrutiny. Labor activists and some [lawmakers](#) say that the company does not adequately protect the safety of warehouse employees, and that it unfairly punishes internal critics. This



year, workers in Alabama, upset about the company's minute-by-minute monitoring of their productivity, organized a serious, [though ultimately failed](#), unionization threat against the company.

In June, a Times [investigation](#) detailed how badly the leave process jammed during the pandemic, finding that it was one of many employment lapses during the company's greatest moment of financial success. Since then, Amazon has emphasized a pledge to become "Earth's best employer." Andy Jassy, who replaced Mr. Bezos as chief executive in July, recently singled out the leave system as a place where it can demonstrate its commitment to improve. The process "didn't work the way we wanted it to work," he said at an [event](#) this month.

In response to the more recent findings on the troubles in its leave program, Amazon elaborated on its efforts to fix the system's "pain points" and "pay issues," as Ms. Reyes put it in the interview. She called the erroneous terminations "the most dire issue that you could have." The company is hiring hundreds of employees, streamlining and connecting systems, clarifying its communications and training human resources staff members to be more empathetic.

But many issues persist, causing breakdowns that have proved devastating. This spring, a Tennessee warehouse worker abruptly stopped receiving disability payments, leaving his family struggling to pay for food, transportation or medical care.

"Not a word that there had ever been a problem," said James Watts, 54, who worked at Amazon in Chattanooga for six years before repeated heart attacks and strokes forced him to go on disability leave. The sudden loss of his benefits caused a cascade of calamities: Because he was without pay for two weeks, his car was repossessed. To afford food and doctors' bills, Mr. Watts and his wife sold their wedding rings.

"We're losing everything," he said.

The benefits restarted without explanation several months later, but the couple are still struggling to regain their footing. Ms. Nantel said that Amazon regretted Mr. Watts's situation, that the process was too confusing and that it was working to simplify the process of navigating leaves.

As the country's second largest private employer, Amazon offers a wide array of leaves — paid or unpaid, medical or personal, legally mandated or not. While Amazon used to outsource the management of its leave programs, it brought the effort in-house when providers couldn't keep up with its growth. It is now one of the largest leave administrators in the country.

Employees apply for leaves online, on an internal app, or wade through automated phone trees. The technology that Amazon uses to manage leaves is a patchwork of software from a variety of companies — including Salesforce, Oracle and Kronos — that do not connect seamlessly.

That complexity forces human resource employees to input many approved leaves, an effort that last fall alone required 67 full-time employees, an internal document shows. Ms. Reyes said a permanent bridge between the programs is scheduled to be completed in March, with incremental improvements in the meantime.

Current and former employees involved in administering leaves say that the company's answer has often been to push them so hard that some required leaves themselves. Last year, in an email sent out on a Friday about a Sunday deadline, a corporate manager of the leave system scolded his teams to do more.

"You all know what needs to be accomplished and by when," he wrote. "No exceptions!"

Ms. Reyes said that employee burnout was a huge concern of hers as she was taking on her new role and that she was trying to address it in several ways.

Amazon's own teams have not always been well-versed in the system, internal documents show. An external assessment last fall found that the back-office staff members who talk with employees "do not understand" the process for taking leaves and regularly gave incorrect information to workers. In one audited call, which dragged on for 29 minutes, the phone agent told a worker that he was too new to be eligible for short-term disability leave, when in fact workers are eligible from their first day.

Ms. Reyes said that with improved training, her teams could now resolve more than nine out of 10 issues on the first call.

In some cases, Amazon has been accused of violating the law. In 2017, Leslie Tullis, who managed a subscription product for children, faced a mounting domestic violence crisis and requested an unpaid leave that employers must offer under Washington State law to protect victims. Once approved, Ms. Tullis would be allowed to work intermittently; she could be absent from work as much as necessary, and with little notice; and she would be protected against retaliation.

Amazon granted the leave, but the company didn't seem to understand what it had said yes to. It had no policy that corresponded to the law of the company's home state, court documents show. Ms. Tullis said she spent as many as eight hours a week dealing with the company to manage her leave. At one point, she was moving regularly to keep her children safe. Despite the legal protections, her bosses would become visibly frustrated when she was behind on work, "like I was betraying them every day," she said.

In June 2019, after she took two days of leave to deal with the latest emergency in a continuing family crisis just before a performance plan was due, she was fired for missing the deadline by two days. The Washington State attorney general's office took up her case, calling Amazon's leave reporting system "a failure" and arguing that the company retaliated in violation of the state law.

Amazon is fighting the case. Ms. Nantel said the company gave Ms. Tullis flexibility and support, as well as the equivalent of about seven months of unpaid leave over two years. She said Ms. Tullis was fired not in retaliation but because her performance faltered while she was not on leave.

Just before she was dismissed, she emailed her manager, stunned that the deadline was not pushed back to accommodate the exact type of crisis the leave law was intended to protect. "Domestic violence is a series of emergencies," Ms. Tullis wrote in an email, "and the victims don't get to pick when it ends."

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Border Patrol light punishments for agents</b>   |
|----------|---|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/politics/border-patrol-discipline.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/politics/border-patrol-discipline.html</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>WASHINGTON — After <a href="#">it was revealed in 2019</a> that scores of border officials belonged to a private Facebook group that contained racist and otherwise offensive posts, investigations into the misconduct resulted in minimal discipline, according to a House Oversight and Reform Committee report released Monday.</p> <p>Where a disciplinary board recommended two-dozen firings, suspensions and letters of reprimand were issued instead and just two lost their jobs. A Border Patrol agent who posted some of the most offensive images was allowed to retire with disability and benefits.</p> <p>The <a href="#">report, released by Democrats</a> on the committee, comes at a time when the behavior of Border Patrol agents is under scrutiny again, this time after <a href="#">agents on horseback</a> corralled Black migrants in the Texas border town of Del Rio last month.</p> <p>The same office responsible for overseeing investigations of 135 Border Patrol employees related to the 2019 Facebook group, called "I'm 10-15" — a reference to a law enforcement code for undocumented immigrants in custody — is also conducting the Del Rio inquiry.</p> <p>After the investigation, 60 employees were found to have violated the agency's code of conduct after posting offensive images and memes, including one questioning whether a photograph of a dead migrant</p> |

father and child was staged and doctored, and obscene pictures of Hispanic lawmakers. Ultimately two employees were fired.

“C.B.P.’s failure to prevent these violent and offensive statements by its own agents or impose adequate discipline creates a serious risk that this behavior will continue,” Representative Carolyn Maloney, Democrat of New York and chairwoman of the oversight committee, said in a statement. “As we saw with the mistreatment of migrants by Border Patrol agents in Del Rio, Texas, last month, systemic behavior problems within C.B.P. persist.”

The Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The president of the Border Patrol union, Brandon Judd, said the disciplinary process for Customs and Border Protection was standard across the federal government and reflective of the justice system, which was built on a person being innocent until proven guilty. “Not the other way around or guilty solely based on an allegation,” he said.

[The Border Patrol](#) had a high-profile role during the Trump administration as an enforcer of former President Donald J. Trump’s harsh immigration policies. Officials at Customs and Border Protection were aware of the Facebook group in 2016, the report said. In 2019, the group had about 9,500 members. Two of the agency’s chiefs were members of the group, and both justified their memberships as a way to keep track of their work force.

But critics have pointed to the “I’m 10-15” group as evidence of a deep-rooted culture within the Border Patrol that has led to the regular debasement of migrants. The [Project on Government Oversight](#), an external watchdog group, recently called Customs and Border Protection the federal government’s “least transparent and accountable” law enforcement agency.

The Trump administration had blocked the House committee’s inquiry, which began in 2019 after the Facebook group was revealed. Customs and Border Protection began providing documents to lawmakers in February, after President Biden took office, the report said.

The committee faulted Customs and Border Protection for not having a strong enough social media policy or doing enough to make its employees aware of it. But its main criticism concerned the agency’s decision to dole out lighter discipline than what was recommended by its Discipline Review Board. The agency’s Office of Professional Responsibility conducted the investigations, the review board made recommendations and a “deciding official” made the final decisions on punishment.

According to the report, of the 60 employees that Customs and Border Protection’s Office of Professional Responsibility determined acted with misconduct, two were fired; 43 were suspended without pay; 12 got letters of reprimand; and three were given other punishments, such as suspension without pay.

In one case, the discipline review board recommended firing a Border Patrol supervisor who posted a C.B.P. video of a migrant falling off a cliff and dying on the group’s Facebook page, as well as an obscene comment about a lawmaker. But in the end, the punishment was a 30-day suspension. Other punishments were reduced after an arbitration process.

The agency’s failure to quickly discipline employees after senior leaders became aware of the Facebook group, its lack of specific disciplinary guidelines and the inconsistent punishments it applied all weakened C.B.P.’s ability to hold agents accountable for misconduct, the report found.

“It is unacceptable that the vast majority of these agents faced reduced punishment and were allowed to continue working with migrants,” Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York, said in a statement. “The late Chairman Cummings would often remind us at moments like these that ‘we are better than this!’” Mr. Jeffries was referring to Representative Elijah E. Cummings, who lead the committee when it [first began](#) investigating the Facebook group. [Mr. Cummings died](#) in October 2019.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>It was not immediately clear if the investigation into the treatment of migrants in Del Rio last month would be conducted the same way, with the review board recommending certain disciplinary measures and a “deciding official.”</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security’s <a href="#">inspector general conducted a separate investigation</a> into whether senior agency officials were aware of how many employees were part of the Facebook group and found that they generally did not. But the internal watchdog said that C.B.P. leaders did nothing to prevent something similar from happening in the future until the department directed them to.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Allegations: Jan 6 planners met Congress</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/exclusive-jan-6-organizers-met-congress-white-house-1245289/">https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/exclusive-jan-6-organizers-met-congress-white-house-1245289/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>As the House investigation into the Jan. 6 attack heats up, some of the planners of the pro-Trump rallies that took place in Washington, D.C., have begun communicating with congressional investigators and sharing new information about what happened when the former president’s supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol. Two of these people have spoken to <i>Rolling Stone</i> extensively in recent weeks and detailed explosive allegations that multiple members of Congress were intimately involved in planning both Trump’s efforts to overturn his election loss and the Jan. 6 events that turned violent.</p> <p><i>Rolling Stone</i> separately confirmed a third person involved in the main Jan. 6 rally in D.C. has communicated with the committee. This is the first report that the committee is hearing major new allegations from potential cooperating witnesses. While there have been prior indications that members of Congress were involved, this is also the first account detailing their purported role and its scope. The two sources also claim they interacted with members of Trump’s team, including former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, who they describe as having had an opportunity to prevent the violence.</p> <p>The two sources, both of whom have been granted anonymity due to the ongoing investigation, describe participating in “dozens” of planning briefings ahead of that day when Trump supporters broke into the Capitol as his election loss to President Joe Biden was being certified.</p> <p>“I remember <a href="#">Marjorie Taylor Greene</a> specifically,” the organizer says. “I remember talking to probably close to a dozen other members at one point or another or their staffs.”</p> <p>For the sake of clarity, we will refer to one of the sources as a rally organizer and the other as a planner. <i>Rolling Stone</i> has confirmed that both sources were involved in organizing the main event aimed at objecting to the electoral certification, which took place at the White House Ellipse on Jan. 6. Trump spoke at that rally and encouraged his supporters to march to the Capitol. Some members of the audience at the Ellipse began walking the mile and a half to the Capitol as Trump gave his speech. The <a href="#">barricades were stormed</a> minutes before the former president concluded his remarks.</p> <p>These two sources also helped plan a series of demonstrations that took place in multiple states around the country in the weeks between the election and the storming of the Capitol. According to these sources, multiple people associated with the March for Trump and Stop the Steal events that took place during this period communicated with members of Congress throughout this process.</p> <p>Along with Greene, the conspiratorial pro-Trump Republican from Georgia who took office earlier this year, the pair both say the members who participated in these conversations or had top staffers join in included Rep. <a href="#">Paul Gosar</a> (R-Ariz.), Rep. <a href="#">Lauren Boebert</a> (R-Colo.), Rep. <a href="#">Mo Brooks</a> (R-Ala.), Rep. <a href="#">Madison Cawthorn</a> (R-N.C.), Rep. <a href="#">Andy Biggs</a> (R-Ariz.), and Rep. <a href="#">Louie Gohmert</a> (R-Texas).</p> <p>“We would talk to Boebert’s team, Cawthorn’s team, Gosar’s team like back to back to back to back,” says the organizer.</p> |

And Gosar, who has been [one of the most prominent defenders](#) of the Jan. 6 rioters, allegedly took things a step further. Both sources say he dangled the possibility of a “blanket pardon” in an unrelated ongoing investigation to encourage them to plan the protests.

“Our impression was that it was a done deal,” the organizer says, “that he’d spoken to the president about it in the Oval ... in a meeting about pardons and that our names came up. They were working on submitting the paperwork and getting members of the House Freedom Caucus to sign on as a show of support.”

The organizer claims the pair received “several assurances” about the “blanket pardon” from Gosar. “I was just going over the list of pardons and we just wanted to tell you guys how much we appreciate all the hard work you’ve been doing,” Gosar said, according to the organizer.

The rally planner describes the pardon as being offered while “encouraging” the staging of protests against the election. While the organizer says they did not get involved in planning the rallies solely due to the pardon, they were upset that it ultimately did not materialize.

“I would have done it either way with or without the pardon,” the organizer says. “I do truly believe in this country, but to use something like that and put that out on the table when someone is so desperate, it’s really not good business.”

Gosar’s office did not respond to requests for comment on this story. *Rolling Stone* has separately obtained documentary evidence that both sources were in contact with Gosar and Boebert on Jan. 6. We are not describing the nature of that evidence to preserve their anonymity. The [House select committee](#) investigating the attack also has interest in Gosar’s office. Gosar’s chief of staff, Thomas Van Flein, was among the people who were [named in the committee’s “sweeping” requests](#) to executive-branch agencies seeking documents and communications from within the Trump administration. Both sources claim Van Flein was personally involved in the conversations about the “blanket pardon” and other discussions about pro-Trump efforts to dispute the election. Van Flein did not respond to a request for comment.

These specific members of Congress were involved in the pro-Trump activism around the election and the electoral certification on Jan. 6. Both Brooks and Cawthorn spoke with Trump at the Ellipse on Jan. 6. In his speech at that event, Brooks, who was [reportedly wearing body armor](#), declared, “Today is the day American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass.” Gosar, Greene, and Boebert were [all billed as speakers](#) at the “Wild Protest,” which also took place on Jan. 6 at the Capitol.

Nick Dyer, who is Greene’s communications director, said she was solely involved in planning to object to the electoral certification on the House floor. Spokespeople for the other members of Congress, who the sources describe as involved in the planning for protests, did not respond to requests for comment.

“Congresswoman Greene and her staff were focused on the Congressional election objection on the House floor and had nothing to do with planning of any protest,” Dyer wrote in an email to *Rolling Stone*.

Dyer further compared Greene’s efforts to dispute certification of Biden’s victory with similar objections [certain Democrats lodged against](#) Trump’s first election.

“She objected just like Democrats who have objected to Republican presidential victories over the years,” wrote Dyer. “Just like in 2017, when Jim McGovern, Jamie Raskin, Pramila Jayapal, Barbara Lee, Sheila Jackson Lee, Raul Grijalva, and Maxine Waters tried to prevent President Trump’s election win from being certified.”

Dyer also suggested the public is far more concerned with issues occurring under President Joe Biden than they are with what happened in January.



“No one cares about Jan. 6 when gas prices are skyrocketing, grocery store shelves are empty, unemployment is skyrocketing, businesses are going bankrupt, our border is being invaded, children are forced to wear masks, vaccine mandates are getting workers fired, and 13 members of our military are murdered by the Taliban and Americans are left stranded in Afghanistan,” Dyer wrote.

In another indication members of Congress may have been involved in planning the protests against the election, Ali Alexander, who helped organize the “Wild Protest,” [declared in a since-deleted livestream broadcast](#) that Gosar, Brooks, and Biggs helped him formulate the strategy for that event.

“I was the person who came up with the Jan. 6 idea with Congressman Gosar, Congressman Mo Brooks, and Congressman Andy Biggs,” Alexander said at the time. “We four schemed up on putting maximum pressure on Congress while they were voting so that — who we couldn’t lobby — we could change the hearts and the minds of Republicans who were in that body hearing our loud roar from outside.”

Alexander led Stop the Steal, which was one of the main groups promoting efforts to dispute Trump’s loss. In December, he [organized](#) a Stop the Steal event in Phoenix, where Gosar was one the main speakers. At that demonstration, Alexander [referred](#) to Gosar as “my captain” and declared “one of the other heroes has been Congressman Andy Biggs.”

Alexander did not respond to requests for comment. The rally planner, who accused Alexander of ratcheting up the potential for violence that day while taking advantage of funds from donors and others who helped finance the events, confirmed that he was in contact with those three members of Congress. “He just couldn’t help himself but go on his live and just talk about everything that he did and who he talked to,” the planner says of Alexander. “So, he, like, really told on himself.”

While it was already clear members of Congress played some role in the Jan. 6 events and similar rallies that occurred in the lead-up to that day, the two sources say they can provide new details about the members’ specific roles in these efforts. The sources plan to share that information with congressional investigators right away. While both sources say their communications with the House’s Jan. 6 committee thus far have been informal, they are expecting to testify publicly.

“I have no problem openly testifying,” the planner says.

A representative for the committee declined to comment. In the past month, the committee has issued subpoenas to top Trump allies, government agencies, and activists who were involved in the planning of events and rallies that took place on that day and in the prior weeks. Multiple sources familiar with the committee’s investigation have confirmed to *Rolling Stone* that, thus far, it seems to be heavily focused on the financing for the Ellipse rally and similar previous events.

Both of the sources made clear that they still believe in Trump’s agenda. They also have questions about how his election loss occurred. The two sources say they do not necessarily believe there were issues with the actual vote count. However, they are concerned that Democrats gained an unfair advantage in the race due to perceived social media censorship of Trump allies and the voting rules that were implemented as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Democrats used tactics to disrupt their political opposition in ways that frankly were completely unacceptable,” the organizer says.

Despite their remaining affinity for Trump and their questions about the vote, both sources say they were motivated to come forward because of their concerns about how the pro-Trump protests against the election ultimately resulted in the violent attack on the Capitol. Of course, with their other legal issues and the House investigation, both of these sources have clear motivation to cooperate with investigators and turn on their former allies. And both of their accounts paint them in a decidedly favorable light compared with their former allies.

“The reason I’m talking to the committee and the reason it’s so important is that — despite Republicans refusing to participate ... this commission’s all we got as far as being able to uncover the truth about what



happened at the Capitol that day,” the organizer says. “It’s clear that a lot of bad actors set out to cause chaos. ... They made us all look like shit.”

And Trump, they admit, was one of those bad actors. A representative for Trump did not respond to a request for comment.

“The breaking point for me [on Jan. 6 was when] Trump starts talking about walking to the Capitol,” the organizer says. “I was like. ‘Let’s get the fuck out of here.’ ”

“I do kind of feel abandoned by Trump,” says the planner. “I’m actually pretty pissed about it and I’m pissed at him.”

The organizer offers an even more succinct assessment when asked what they would say to Trump. “What the fuck?” the organizer says.

The two potential witnesses plan to present to the committee allegations about how these demonstrations were funded and to detail communications between organizers and the White House.

According to both sources, members of Trump’s administration and former members of his campaign team were involved in the planning. Both describe Katrina Pierson, who worked for Trump’s campaign in 2016 and 2020, as a key liaison between the organizers of protests against the election and the White House.

“Katrina was like our go-to girl,” the organizer says. “She was like our primary advocate.”

Pierson spoke at the Ellipse rally on Jan. 6. She did not respond to requests for comment.

Both sources also describe Trump’s White House chief of staff, Mark Meadows, as someone who played a major role in the conversations surrounding the protests on Jan. 6. Among other things, they both say concerns were raised to Meadows about Alexander’s protest at the Capitol and the potential that it could spark violence. Meadows was subpoenaed by the committee last month as part of a group of four people “with close ties to the former President who were working in or had communications with the White House on or in the days leading up to the [January 6th](#) insurrection.”

“Meadows was 100 percent made aware of what was going on,” says the organizer. “He’s also like a regular figure in these really tiny groups of national organizers.”

A separate third source, who has also communicated with the committee and was involved in the Ellipse rally, says Kylie Kremer, one of the key organizers at that event, boasted that she was going to meet with Meadows at the White House ahead of the rally. The committee has been provided with that information. Kremer did not respond to a request for comment.

Both the organizer and the planner say Alexander initially agreed he would not hold his “Wild Protest” at the Capitol and that the Ellipse would be the only major demonstration. When Alexander seemed to be ignoring that arrangement, both claim worries were brought to Meadows.

“Despite making a deal ... they plowed forward with their own thing at the Capitol on Jan.y 6 anyway,” the organizer says of Alexander and his allies. “We ended up escalating that to everybody we could, including Meadows.”

A representative for Meadows did not respond to requests for comment.

Along with making plans for Jan. 6, the sources say, the members of Congress who were involved solicited supposed proof of election fraud from them. Challenging electoral certification requires the support of a member of the Senate. While more than a hundred Republican members of the House ultimately objected to the Electoral College count that formalized Trump’s loss, only [a handful of senators](#) backed the effort. According to the sources, the members of Congress and their staff advised them

to hold rallies in specific states. The organizer says locations were chosen to put “pressure” on key senators that “we considered to be persuadable.”

“We had also been coordinating with some of our congressional contacts on, like, what would be presented after the individual objections, and our expectation was that that was the day the storm was going to arrive,” the organizer says, adding, “It was supposed to be the best evidence that they had been secretly gathering. ... Everyone was going to stay at the Ellipse throughout the congressional thing.”

Heading into Jan. 6, both sources say, the plan they had discussed with other organizers, Trump allies, and members of Congress was a rally that would solely take place at the Ellipse, where speakers — including the former president — would present “evidence” about issues with the election. This demonstration would take place in conjunction with objections that were being made by Trump allies during the certification on the House floor that day.

“It was in a variety of calls, some with Gosar and Gosar’s team, some with Marjorie Taylor Greene and her team ... Mo Brooks,” the organizer says.

“The Capitol was never in play,” insists the planner.

A senior staffer for a Republican member of Congress, who was also granted anonymity to discuss the ongoing investigation, similarly says they believed the events would only involve supporting objections on the House floor. The staffer says their member was engaged in planning that was “specifically and fully above board.”

“A whole host of people let this go a totally different way,” the senior Republican staffer says. “They fucked it up for a lot of people who were planning to present evidence on the House floor. We were pissed off at everything that happened .”

The two sources claim there were early concerns about Alexander’s event. They had seen him with members of the paramilitary groups 1st Amendment Praetorian (1AP) and the Oath Keepers in his entourage at prior pro-Trump rallies. Alexander [was filmed](#) with a reputed member of 1AP at his side at a November Stop the Steal event that took place in Georgia. The two sources also claim to have been concerned about drawing people to the area directly adjacent to the Capitol on Jan. 6, given the anger among Trump supporters about the electoral certification that was underway that day.

“They knew that they weren’t there to sing “Kumbaya” and, like, put up a peace sign,” the planner says. “These frickin’ people were angry.”

[Return to Top](#)

## Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Calif. unemployment fraud tops \$20B  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-25/californias-unemployment-fraud-20-billion">https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-25/californias-unemployment-fraud-20-billion</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>SACRAMENTO — California has given away at least \$20 billion to criminals in the form of fraudulent unemployment benefits, state officials said Monday, confirming a number smaller than originally feared but one that still accounts for more than 11% of all benefits paid since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>State officials blamed nearly all of that fraud on a hastily approved expansion of unemployment benefits by Congress that let people who were self-employed get weekly checks from the government with few safeguards to stop people who were not eligible to receive them.</p> <p>“I don’t think people have captured in their mind the enormity of the amount of money has been issued errantly to undeserving people,” said Assemblyman Tom Lackey, a Republican from Palmdale, who</p> |

brought along an illustration of 29 dump trucks filled to the brim with \$100 bills representing just over half of that money lost to fraud.

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in widespread fraud at unemployment agencies across the country, with at least \$87 billion in fraudulent payments approved by states, according to a June [report](#) from the inspector general's office at the U.S. Department of Labor. In [Arizona alone](#), state officials said scammers pocketed nearly 30% of all its unemployment benefit payments.

In California, the fraud was so widespread that state officials approved at least [\\$810 million in benefits](#) in the names of people who were in prison, including dozens of infamous killers on death row. State officials even sent [\\$21,000 in benefits](#) to an address in Roseville under the name and Social Security number of U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), some of the \$2 million in total fraudulent payments that were sent to that same address.

But Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration on Monday sought to assure state lawmakers that the fraud pipeline in California has been closed. Employment Development Department Director Rita Saenz said the state has implemented new identity verification software that, along with other preventative measures, has stopped an estimated \$120 billion in fraud attempts.

Saenz told lawmakers Monday during an oversight hearing that "2020 was an anomaly, a criminal assault on the unemployment insurance program across the country."

"We closed the door to that type of fraud last year," she said.

But the department is still plagued with other problems. When people apply for unemployment benefits, sometimes the information they file with the state is different from what their former employer filed. When this happens, state officials have to interview these people to resolve those issues.

But people are having to wait up to [six months for these interviews](#), Saenz called this delay "unacceptable." But she said the state has a new policy that pays people their benefits while they wait, as long as they pass the state's fraud filters. Saenz said about half of the people waiting for interviews are being paid.

"Things are not improving fast enough for some. There are still some challenges ahead," she said. California has paid out more than [\\$178 billion in unemployment benefits](#) since the start of the pandemic based on 25.5 million total claims. Saenz said that's four times as much as the combined worst two years of the Great Recession a decade ago.

The sheer volume of claims overwhelmed the department, creating a massive backlog and making it nearly impossible to get an answer when people called the agency's call centers. In January, a state audit blasted the department for doing little to stop the fraud for the first four months of the pandemic, blaming the Newsom administration for "significant missteps and inaction."

On Monday, the auditor's office said the department had completed [13 of its 21 recommendations](#). "EDD has made notable progress in addressing areas of concern we found during our audits. But significant steps still need to be taken to address areas of risk," said Bob Harris, who managed the department's audit.

Saenz told lawmakers the department had not missed any of the auditor's deadlines to make changes. She said the department plans to finish hiring people for its newly formed fraud investigation unit by the end of November.

But other changes will take longer. The department is working on a new system that will deposit unemployment benefits directly to people's bank accounts instead of sending them a check or debit card in the mail, which is more susceptible to fraud. But Saenz said this will take a few years to implement.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>That delay upset some lawmakers, who said they were worried people were losing faith in their government.</p> <p>“When one of our government agencies fails this badly, I believe that it breaks the public trust,” said Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris, a Democrat from Laguna Beach.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>HEADLINE</b> | <b>10/25 Ecuador stares into abyss of drugs, crime</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>   | <a href="https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211025-drugs-crime-and-protests-ecuador-stares-into-the-abyss">https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211025-drugs-crime-and-protests-ecuador-stares-into-the-abyss</a>   |
| <b>GIST</b>     | <p>Emboldened drug traffickers, hundreds of deaths in prisons, a government dogged by scandal, and an economy ravaged by Covid have Ecuador staring into the abyss.</p> <p>Crime, mostly linked to drugs, has claimed almost 1,900 lives this year, just this Friday taking the life of Alex Quinonez, one of the country's most promising athletes.</p> <p>His death sparked an outpouring of grief in the Andean nation of 17.7 million people, wracked by political instability and which this year saw one of the worst prison massacres in Latin America's history.</p> <p>After just five months in power, conservative President Guillermo Lasso is facing an investigation in Congress over "Pandora Papers" revelations that he allegedly hid millions in assets overseas -- and he claims his opponents are planning impeachment.</p> <p>And with demonstrations planned this week against increasing fuel prices and other economic ills worsened by the pandemic, tensions are unlikely to abate anytime soon.</p> <p>- Narco violence -</p> <p>Nestled between Colombia and Peru, the world's top cocaine producers, Ecuador had managed to avoid the worst of the drug-related violence that engulfed its troubled neighbours.</p> <p>But a war for drug revenues has pit gangs at the service of Mexican and Colombian cartels against each other, sparking a surge in violence that has sent the homicide rate from 7.8 per 100,000 inhabitants last year to 10.6 between January and October 2021.</p> <p>The violence claimed one of its most high profile victims Friday with the killing of famed Ecuadorian athlete Alex Quinonez in the port city of Guayaquil.</p> <p>One of the country's most successful athletes and among the world's top sprinters, his death prompted an outpouring of grief -- and demands that his killers be brought to justice.</p> <p>Ecuador lacks "a strong response to a bigger problem, which is the penetration of transnational organized crime," said Daniel Ponton, dean of the School of Security and Defense at the Institute for Higher National Studies (IAEN).</p> <p>The violence has prompted President Lasso to declare a state of emergency for 60 days, sending the military into the streets in support of the police.</p> <p>"National sovereignty is threatened by drug trafficking," he said.</p> <p>Analysts say drug traffickers have their sights set on Ecuador due to its permeable borders, a dollarized economy, and major seaports for export.</p> <p>Ecuador "is among the corridors that lead to the countries with the highest drug consumption, such as the United States, through the Pacific basin, and Brazil, through the Amazon River basin," Fernando Carrion, from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Flacso), told AFP.</p> |

Drug seizures reached an annual record of 147 tonnes between January and October 2021, and experts believe that domestic consumption is around 100 tonnes.

Violence has consumed Ecuador's prisons, where horrific armed clashes between inmates linked to cartels including the Mexican Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation groups have left around 240 dead so far this year.

In September, 119 inmates were killed in one of Latin America's worst ever prison massacres.

Lasso has sent the military into the prisons, often overcrowded well beyond their original capacity.

The penitentiaries have become "criminal central commands," according to Fredy Rivera, director of the URVIO Latin American Journal of Security Studies.

'Tremendous discomfort'

Lasso came to power pledging to bring "true change" to a pandemic-battered and debt-laden economy and a political system riven with gridlock when he won the election in April.

But he has angered indigenous people, workers and students by increasing fuel prices by up to 12 percent on Friday.

Those groups plan to march Tuesday in Quito to demand a freeze in prices after monthly increases since 2020.

"Instead of lowering tensions, this is causing tremendous discomfort, discontent among workers and the people," union leader Angel Sanchez told AFP.

Involved in the protest will be the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (Conaie), which took part in riots that overthrew three presidents between 1997 and 2005, and which led 2019 demonstrations against the elimination of fuel subsidies in which 11 people died.

If the government "decides to go for the coercive alternative... these tensions will escalate," said political scientist Karen Garzon Sherdeck from SEK University in Quito.

Lasso, a former banker, is currently under investigation for appearing in the "Pandora Papers" by the Prosecutor's Office and Congress, in which he does not have a majority.

Instead the legislature is dominated by allies of former socialist president Rafael Correa -- Lasso's main rival.

Lasso has said his opponents are planning to impeach him, in a move that would add him to a long list of deposed Ecuadorian leaders.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Mexico cartels exploit American teens</b>   |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.foxbusiness.com/media/fox-exclusive-mexican-cartels-paying-teenagers-1k-per-head-to-traffic-illegal-immigrants-to-houston">https://www.foxbusiness.com/media/fox-exclusive-mexican-cartels-paying-teenagers-1k-per-head-to-traffic-illegal-immigrants-to-houston</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Mexican drug cartels are exploiting American teenagers into big paydays if they assist in the human trafficking crisis at the southern border – specifically paying them \$1,000 per head to traffic illegal alien migrants to Texas' largest city, Fox Business has learned.</p> <p>On Monday, "Mornings with Maria" host Maria Bartiromo shared exclusive photos of a pickup truck reportedly driven by one of those teenagers that had flipped over into a culvert while transporting 13 illegal aliens in its cab toward Houston.</p> |

Bartiromo said some of the photos came from Jackson County Sheriff A.J. Louderback, whose jurisdiction sits about two-thirds of the way from the Rio Grande to Houston.

"You have these teenagers with cars back and forth from the border to Houston all day long," she said.

She said the cartels are using the popular social media app TikTok to "entrap" youth as young as 15 into eagerly making large sums of money.

Money will not suffice for organizers of the latest massive migrant caravan that recently overran Mexican federal forces on its way north to Texas from Central America, which Bartiromo reported said as much in a statement directed at the White House.

"It's unclear what they want," she said.

The host added that Biden again falsely claimed he has been to the Mexican border, when pressed on the illegal immigration crisis, while Fox News reported last week that Biden had only come in close proximity to the border in 2008 when he landed in El Paso to be motorcaded to a campaign event in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Louderback later joined Bartiromo and dubbed Biden's border strategy as the "Destroy America Plan" – in the vein of "Build Back Better" – and that his office and that of Texas DPS is overrun with cases of human smuggling and illegal border egress.

Biden is "empowering" the cartels to do things like hiring teenagers to help with their human trafficking, he added.

The lawman told Bartiromo the cartels are likely targeting the young driver demographic because they are the ones most likely to jump at an offer of quick cash:

"Tell me who would be able to withstand that... [versus] working at Whataburger for minimum wage."

Louderback said the teenager who apparently flipped his truck into the ditch is facing several charges including human smuggling for benefit – a second-degree felony in the state of Texas.

"Two of them in this truck were below 18 years of age. That's two more felonies there. You've got the evading, gross negligence, child endangerment, all these filed against this one juvenile," he said, adding that the driver allegedly was unlicensed. "I don't think it's enough to deter this kid from continuing as a cartel operative."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 'Criminal couponer' bilked stores \$31.8M</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/virginia-beach-criminal-couponers-bilked-stores-out-of-31-8-million-funded-lavish-lifestyle-with-proceeds">https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/virginia-beach-criminal-couponers-bilked-stores-out-of-31-8-million-funded-lavish-lifestyle-with-proceeds</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>A Virginia woman sold \$31.8 million worth of <a href="#">counterfeit</a> coupons to thrifty <a href="#">shoppers</a> and used the funds from her racket for high-end home renovations and <a href="#">vacations</a>, according to new information released by the FBI.</p> <p>Lori Ann Talens, 41, was sentenced to 12 years in prison last month after pleading guilty to mail fraud, wire fraud, and <a href="#">health care</a> fraud in April. Her husband, 43-year-old Pacifico Talens Jr., supported the scheme and was sentenced to more than 7 years in prison.</p> <p>The "criminal couponer" used her graphic design skills to manipulate barcodes and create coupons for almost any store and any product, the FBI said.</p> |



With a background in marketing, she was then able to sell the coupons through social media groups for coupon enthusiasts. Talens shielded herself from authorities by using encrypted communication services to deal with her customers and by using [cryptocurrencies](#) for payments.

The scheme netted Talens and her husband more than \$400,00 over three years as the fraudulent coupons went undetected.

"If the coupons are rejected, if they are counterfeit, then the retailer doesn't get paid back for them," FBI Special Agent [Shannon Brill said](#) last week.

"But that whole process takes a lot of time," Brill said. "By the time a coupon gets identified as being fraudulent or fake, that coupon has already been used who knows how many times."

Authorities only started catching on after the Coupon Information Corporation alerted the FBI's Norfolk Office that they had found \$125,000 worth of fake coupons.

Investigators secured a search warrant for the Talens' home and found more than \$1 million worth of fake coupons "in every jacket pocket" and "stuffed in her vehicles."

"Despite Hollywood's recent portrayal of coupon fraud as a comedy or simply 'bending the rules,' it is a serious matter," Coupon Information Corporation Executive Director [Bud Miller](#) said in a statement.

"Coupon counterfeiting is generally a felony level offense, the penalties of which may include years in prison, total loss of assets, life-long restitution orders, and reduced job opportunities."

Aside from the fraudulent coupon ring, Talen also defrauded Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program out of about \$43,000 over a period of five years by failing to report her husband's legitimate employment income when applying.

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Nigeria gunmen storm prison</b>   |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://thehill.com/policy/international/578222-nigerian-gunmen-storm-prison-freeing-800-inmates">https://thehill.com/policy/international/578222-nigerian-gunmen-storm-prison-freeing-800-inmates</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>A gunman attacked a jail in Nigeria's Oyo State late Friday, forcefully freeing some 800 inmates, the majority of which remained missing on Saturday, <a href="#">Reuters</a> reported.</p> <p>Officials said the attackers used dynamite to explode the walls and enter through the prison yard after exchanging gunfire with prison officers, the news service reported.</p> <p>All but 64 convicts escaped in the attack. About 575 inmates were missing, and 262 others had been recaptured, the prison service said on Saturday, per Reuters. All of the missing detainees were awaiting trial.</p> <p>"While all the awaiting trial detainees were forced out of custody, the cells housing the convicts and the female inmates were not vandalized," the prison service said, according to Reuters.</p> <p>Friday's attack marked the third of its kind in recent months.</p> <p>A similar attack in Imo state in April resulted in 1,800 inmates being freed. Last month, another 266 inmates were forcibly freed in Kogi state, Reuters noted.</p> <p>Nigeria has struggled to contain violence and kidnapping across society. A group of college students were <a href="#">kidnapped from their school by armed gunmen</a> in March.</p> <p>Kidnappers <a href="#">attacked</a> another college in February and took several students in the middle of the night. And in December, <a href="#">nearly 330 students were kidnapped</a> from the Government Science Secondary School.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>Apart from the kidnappings, a gunman <a href="#">stormed a market and killed at least 43 people</a> in the country's northern Sokoto state earlier this month.</p> <p>Girls who were kidnapped from their school by Boko Haram, a militant group, nearly seven years ago — a crime that drew international attention to Nigeria — <a href="#">continue to escape and reunite with their families</a>.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/25 Air War College professor pleads guilty</b>   |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://therecord.media/air-war-college-professor-pleads-guilty-to-hiding-contacts-with-chinese-official/">https://therecord.media/air-war-college-professor-pleads-guilty-to-hiding-contacts-with-chinese-official/</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>A civilian professor at the Air War College on Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, pleaded guilty to making false statements to a federal agent about contacts he had with a Chinese official, the <a href="#">Justice Department announced on Monday</a>.</p> <p>According to court documents, Zhang Xiaoming, 69, a naturalized citizen of Chinese descent began working as an Air War College (AWC) professor in July 2003. He regularly traveled to China for work and to visit his family there.</p> <p>Beginning sometime in 2012, the Justice Department said, Zhang developed a relationship with a known foreign official working with the Shanghai Municipal Government. Records indicate that Zhang met with the official in person on approximately six occasions and exchanged some 40 emails with him from December 2012 to January 2017.</p> <p>At some point during this period, Zhang became aware that the official was using, or attempting to use, their relationship to gain access to sensitive information in Zhang's possession, as well as to make contact with other potentially valuable individuals.</p> <p>Zhang held a "secret" security clearance as part of his work at the Air War College and he attended annual security training that made clear he needed to report suspicious foreign contacts and relationships with foreign government officials.</p> <p>Zhang didn't report the relationship and, according to his plea agreement, he admitted to misleading authorities about the relationship. He even told authorities in 2017 he didn't know the foreign official. It wasn't until July of last year that he eventually admitted to being untruthful about meetings he knew were improper.</p> <p>Zhang pleaded guilty to making false statements to a federal agent and faces a maximum of five years in prison at sentencing.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Arrest: Colombia most-wanted drug lord</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/z3nb7x/colombias-most-wanted-drug-lord-since-pablo-escobar-is-now-under-arrest">https://www.vice.com/en/article/z3nb7x/colombias-most-wanted-drug-lord-since-pablo-escobar-is-now-under-arrest</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>For years, Colombia's most-wanted drug lord has eluded capture, despite a \$5 million bounty on his head by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and an \$800,000 reward by the Colombian government. His good fortune seemed to end on Saturday.</p> <p>In a photo released by Colombia's presidential press office, Dairo Antonio Úsuga, better known as "Otoniel," was presented to the media in handcuffs with armed soldiers flanking him on each side.</p> <p>Colombian authorities said intelligence provided by the U.S. and U.K. led some 500 members of the country's special forces to Úsuga's hideout in the jungle, where he was protected by eight rings of security, <a href="#">the Associated Press reported</a>.</p> <p>Colombia's conservative President Iván Duque compared Úsuga's capture to that of drug kingpin Pablo</p> |

Escobar nearly thirty years ago, and the country's defense minister said the arrest is a definitive blow against drug-fueled violence.

"In operation Osiris 'Otoniel' fell! A symbol of evil. One of the biggest drug traffickers and child recruiters. Thanks to our soldiers and policemen! The promise to end narco-crime is fulfilled," Defense Minister [Diego Molano Aponte wrote on Twitter](#).

Molano said the plan is to extradite Úsuga to the U.S., adding that both the U.S. and Colombian rewards for information about the drug lord would be paid, [according to Reuters](#).

But civilians were dubious about the circumstances leading to Úsuga's arrest. [Photos showing Úsuga smiling](#), flanked by smiling soldiers in what appeared to be a helicopter, led some on social media to speculate that the drug lord had voluntarily turned himself in as part of a deal with the government.

"This is a party between old friends riding in a military helicopter at our expense. Does anyone believe the story that this is a capture?" wrote investigative journalist [Gonzalo Guillén on Twitter](#).

There have also been reports that Úsuga's power had been [waning in recent years](#), and that new commanders were taking more control of regional areas.

"It's a mystery how Otoniel was capable of managing such complex networks amidst the jungle," said Federico Varese, a professor of criminology at the University of Oxford. "The guy moved on a donkey with a few bodyguards. He used dogs to detect any move in the jungle. So one suspects that he was not the only player."

Still, Úsuga's capture was a political win for Duque, who is Colombia's [least popular president](#) in recent history, according to Gallup polling. His popularity plummeted after [massive protests broke out](#) around the country in April and May following his now-abandoned plan to overhaul the tax system.

"The government isn't doing well in the polls. The ruling party is plagued by scandals," said Sergio Guzmán, director of Colombia Risk Analysis, a political risk consultancy firm based in Bogotá. Úsuga's capture "offers a lot of respite for the government because it's a big win so they are going to try and make as much as they can out of it."

"Bar none this is a success," Guzman added. "But there is nothing that suggests this is a game-changer. One fallen drug lord means an opportunity for the next."

Born in the middle of Colombia's decades-long civil war, Úsuga [reportedly got his start](#) with the Popular Liberation Army, a Marxist guerilla organization known in Colombia as the EPL. He later switched sides and aligned with right-wing paramilitaries. He became a mid-rank commander of the Gulf Clan, or Urabeños, and took on the lead role in 2009 after the arrest of its then-leader.

The Gulf Clan is a powerful player in the transnational drug trade, moving cocaine from the Gulf of Urubá near the Panamanian border north through the Caribbean as part of its journey to Mexico and the United States.

"He was the guy who controlled the principal corridor of drugs and cocoa crops. Most of the drug traffickers paid him to support their merchandise," said Gustavo Duncan Cruz, a political science professor at EAFIT University in Colombia.

But Duncan Cruz said Úsuga wasn't nearly as powerful as Pablo Escobar, despite comparisons by government officials. Escobar operated from a major city — Medellín — and gained international infamy by allegedly ordering the bombing of a jetliner because he believed drug-trade informants were on board, according to authorities. The explosion killed all 107 people aboard.

Úsuga, by contrast, ran his organization from the jungle, eschewing both technology and the flashy life-

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>style embraced by many in the drug-trade business. Over the years, he managed to evade sophisticated efforts to try and capture him, including a <a href="#">2015 military operation</a> that involved 1,000 soldiers and police officers.</p> <p>In 2017, Úsuga published a video during Pope Francis' visit to Colombia and stated his desire to come to justice and allow his organization to demobilize. Nothing came of that request, as far as is publicly known.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 UK rise police disciplined for sex abuse</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dgmeq/sharp-rise-in-police-disciplined-for-abusing-powers-for-sex">https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dgmeq/sharp-rise-in-police-disciplined-for-abusing-powers-for-sex</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The number of UK police officers and staff investigated for exploiting their position for sex has risen sharply, according to new data released by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).</p> <p>In the last three years, 66 officers and police staff faced disciplinary proceedings after being investigated for alleged abuse of position for a sexual purpose, also known as APSP. Forty-two of these were in the last year alone. Out of these 66 cases, misconduct was proven for 63.</p> <p>Fifty-two individuals were found guilty of gross misconduct, according to the IOPC. Of these, 73 per cent – 38 people – are no longer serving as officers and were barred from working for the police again.</p> <p>During this time, only seven individuals were also prosecuted for criminal offences, leading to six convictions and three people receiving a custodial sentence. Sentences were given for “unauthorised access to computer material,” and “unlawfully obtaining personal data,” among other offences.</p> <p>The rise comes after a concerted effort to clamp down on the corruption by the IOPC.</p> <p>Deputy director general of the IOPC Claire Bassett said: “This kind of behaviour is an appalling abuse of the public’s trust and has a devastating impact on the people involved, who are often in a vulnerable situation. The police are there to help them, not exploit them.”</p> <p>“We are seeing how our work is helping tackle the problem – corrupt officers have been dismissed and convicted,” she said. “We have also made a number of recommendations to help police forces spot and tackle this behaviour.”</p> <p>Bassett said many cases involved “actions that may seem harmless at first” such as messages sent from an officer’s personal phone or “kisses at the end of a text message” which can escalate.</p> <p>The steep rise in officers investigated for this abuse of power is partly due to many forces not treating complaints about APSP seriously, leading to a change in referral criteria in 2017. In 2016, for example, only 72 officers were referred to the IOPC for this corruption, only 10 of which were investigated. In 2020, 131 people were referred, 70 of which were investigated.</p> <p>Officers or police staff using their authority for sexual purposes is now the biggest form of corruption reported to the IOPC, accounting for around a quarter of all referrals to the IOPC.</p> <p>The data comes during a time of intense scrutiny of police behaviour, after <a href="#">Wayne Couzens, was convicted</a> for the rape and murder of Sarah Everard this year. Couzens was a serving police officer when he kidnapped Everard in May after she was walking home from a friend’s house, <a href="#">using his police ID</a> to coerce her into his vehicle.</p> <p>Debbie Summers from campaign group Sisters Uncut said, “The 63 police officers found to have recently abused their powers for sexual gain prove that violence and coercion are deeply entrenched within the police force. We have no doubt there are even more cases yet to be uncovered, and that this is just the tip of the iceberg.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>“With 42 of these incidents taking place this year, it's clear this violence is institutional, committed by people who are emboldened, and unafraid. As a society, we do not have to stand by and watch this happen. It is up to all of us to keep the police in check, make their new powers ungovernable, and keep each other safe.”</p> <p>Sisters Uncut is running “CopWatch” training which includes, “how to intervene when you see a stop and search, basic know your rights, and how to support those most targeted by racist and sexist police.”</p> <p>Kevin Blowe, campaign coordinator for the Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol), told VICE World News: “Abuses of power happen within a culture of impunity by police officers who believe they can get away with sexual violence or racism because others will close ranks and look the other away.”</p> <p>“The figures are alarming, particularly for the last year. However, so many women sharing their stories in the weeks since the conviction of Wayne Couzens does raise the question: how many more abuses like this are never reported, never properly investigated and never led to disciplinary action because colleagues kept quiet? And why, when officers are supposedly accountable personally for every decision they make to use their extensive legal powers, are there so few prosecutions?”</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Seattle PD investigates weekend shootings</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3202886/seattle-police-weekend-shootings-october-2021/">https://mynorthwest.com/3202886/seattle-police-weekend-shootings-october-2021/</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>The Seattle Police Department is <a href="#">investigating a series of reported shootings</a> that took place across the city over the weekend.</p> <p>The first incident took place just after 1 a.m. on Saturday, following reports of shots fired near Occidental Avenue South and South Yesler Way outside of a Pioneer Square nightclub. Officers say that “this was a continuation of a fight that had occurred earlier” inside the club. Two women later told police that they were involved with the shooting, describing “a disturbance” where a man had fired a gun at them.</p> <p>The women — each of whom possess legal concealed carry permits — returned fire with their own guns. Both were released from the scene pending a police investigation, while officers were unable to locate the man involved in the incident.</p> <p>A second incident took place shortly after 5 p.m. on Saturday, when a man fired a single shot into a display in an Othello cellphone store after attempting to walk out of the store without paying for a new phone. Officers were unable to locate a suspect after searching the area.</p> <p>Later that night around 9:45 p.m. in the Columbia City area, police received reports of “a man driving a Toyota Corolla aggressively.” A witness told police that a passenger in the vehicle yelled at him while stopped at a light, and then heard two gunshots. No damage was found, and officers were “unable to locate a shooting scene.”</p> <p>Another incident was reported in the 9200 block of Southwest Barton Street just before 2 a.m. on Sunday. Responders transported a man wounded by a gunshot to Harborview Medical Center. Officers found a shell casing on the ground but could not locate a suspect.</p> <p>A fifth incident under investigation occurred in the 7800 block of First Avenue South, although SPD has not specified the day or time it took place. In that incident, a man was found by responders with a gunshot to his groin. He informed officers that the suspect fled in a white Ford Fusion, although police were unsuccessful in finding him.</p> |
|          | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Chicago: 1970s serial killer victim identified</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/john-wayne-gacy-victim.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/us/john-wayne-gacy-victim.html</a> |

CHICAGO — Authorities in Cook County have identified another victim of John Wayne Gacy, the serial killer who terrorized Chicago in the 1970s, murdering dozens of young men and burying their bodies at his suburban home.

The announcement was the latest in a series of revelations by the Cook County Sheriff's Office, which reopened the Gacy case a decade ago and has since discovered identities of victims using DNA evidence and expanding genealogical databases.

The latest identification is Francis Wayne Alexander, a native of North Carolina who was living in Chicago at the time of his death.

Mr. Alexander's family was notified in recent days of the results of the investigation, Sheriff Thomas J. Dart said on Monday at a news conference.

"There was family that loved him," Sheriff Dart said. "But he had made decisions in his life that led them to believe that he just wanted to be left alone."

Mr. Gacy was arrested in 1978. When officials searched his home in Norwood Park Township, Ill., they found 29 bodies in or near his house, most of them in the home's crawl space. Four other victims were found in the nearby Des Plaines River.

Police believe that Mr. Gacy lured some men to his home after meeting them in Chicago, and that he abducted and raped some victims. He often killed them by strangulation.

Mr. Gacy [was executed by lethal injection](#) in 1994.

Detectives in Cook County have painstakingly worked to identify victims who remained unknown, solving three cold cases since 2011. Five victims are still unidentified.

In a statement, the Alexander family thanked the Sheriff's Department for the investigation and said it finally had a sense of resolution.

"It is hard, even 45 years later, to know the fate of our beloved Wayne," the statement said. "He was killed at the hands of a vile and evil man. Our hearts are heavy, and our sympathies go out to the other victims' families. Our only comfort is knowing this killer no longer breathes the same air as we do."

On Monday, authorities described how they had connected Mr. Alexander's body, found in Mr. Gacy's crawl space, with his identity so many decades later.

Mr. Alexander moved to Chicago from New York with his wife in 1975, officials said. The couple divorced months later, and Mr. Alexander remained in Chicago.

He lived on Winona Street on the North Side of Chicago, in a neighborhood where Mr. Gacy was known to have targeted other victims, [including William Bundy](#), a 19-year-old construction worker.

After Mr. Alexander's divorce, he continued to contact his family in North Carolina, calling to check in or sending notes from his travels. In 1976, a postcard from California arrived. It was the last note from Mr. Alexander that his family ever received.

The family contacted the police in California and asked them to check the return address on the postcard. He was no longer at that address, the police replied.

Mr. Alexander's family did not call the Chicago Police Department to ask for help or file a missing persons report, officials said. For decades, his relatives had little idea where he had gone.



Detective Jason Moran of the Cook County Sheriff's Office, who worked on the case, said he had interviewed dozens of families whose relatives have gone missing for extended periods.

"They live in a cruel limbo," he said. "Some families have told me in the past that maybe their loved one had amnesia. Some families have real outlandish ideas. Some don't want to believe their loved ones are dead."

Mr. Alexander's family was no different, he said: "They were not unlike other families, where they really didn't know what to think."

The investigation into Victim No. 5 — the fifth victim discovered at the Gacy house, now found to be Mr. Alexander — began about one year ago.

The Sheriff's Department was aided by a nonprofit organization, [the DNA Doe Project](#), whose all-volunteer staff tries to match unidentified remains with genetic profiles that had been uploaded to an open-source genealogy database.

Using DNA from one of Victim No. 5's molars, the DNA Doe Project found connections to Mr. Alexander's family. Detective Moran followed up with research, interviews and further DNA testing before confirming that he had found the identity of the victim.

Investigators also searched financial records and found other records, including a parking ticket dated to January 1976. They estimated that Mr. Alexander was either 21 or 22 at the time of his death, which they said took place between early 1976 and 1977.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Seattle weekend: 3 unrelated stabbings</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/three-unrelated-stabbings-in-less-than-24-hours-lead-to-two-arrests">https://komonews.com/news/local/three-unrelated-stabbings-in-less-than-24-hours-lead-to-two-arrests</a>   |
| GIST     | <p>SEATTLE – A violent weekend with three stabbings in 24 hours resulted in two arrests and one suspect on the run.</p> <p>Seattle police said the first of three stabbings was in the 200 block of Bell Street around 4:15 p.m. Saturday.</p> <p>Officers say they found a 52-year-old man stabbed multiple times and rushed him to the hospital. The suspect, a 19-year-old man, was found several blocks away and arrested on assault charges.</p> <p>The next stabbing was Sunday afternoon at 2:08 in the 1400 block of 3rd Avenue. Police said they found two men who had been stabbed in the back at an apartment.</p> <p>Witnesses here told officers they saw the two men, 31 and 42 years old, in the hallway when another resident began to yell at them to leave. The victims began leaving when the suspect stabbed each in the back.</p> <p>This suspect was arrested when officers found the 46-year-old in his apartment.</p> <p>The third stabbing was at the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station.</p> <p>The victim in this stabbing said he was at the station around 4:15 p.m. Sunday when he saw a person smashing a guitar on the tracks, so the victim yelled at him to get off.</p> <p>The suspect then allegedly walked up to the victim and slashed him with a knife in the face before running off toward the escalators.</p> <p>The victim, 27, took himself to the hospital. This suspect has not yet been arrested.</p> |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | 10/25 Triple murder suspect turns self in  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/des-moines-police-id-suspect-in-triple-murder-outside-sports-bar-last-month">https://komonews.com/news/local/des-moines-police-id-suspect-in-triple-murder-outside-sports-bar-last-month</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>DES MOINES, Wa. -- Police in Des Moines said a suspect accused in the fatal shooting of three people outside a Des Moines sports bar last month surrendered Monday evening to investigators, who continued their search to find a second suspect who may have been involved in the incident.</p> <p>Joshua Puloka, 44, who also goes by the name of Joshua Everybodytalksabout, is facing three counts of murder in connection with the overnight shooting on Sept. 26 at La Familia Sports Pub and Lounge, according to a statement by Des Moines police.</p> <p>Des Moines police Sgt. Scott Oak said Puloka voluntarily turned himself in and he was booked into the local jail. It was not immediately clear if or when bail would be set in the case.</p> <p>Puloka had previously been tried for a 2014 murder charge but a jury acquitted him while finding him guilty of lesser charges.</p> <p>Demarcus L. Simmons, 32, who is also known as D NICE, is also being sought and is facing a felony assault charge, according to the written police statement. It was not immediately clear what Simmons' involvement may have been during the incident.</p> <p>Investigators have not disclosed a motive for the incident or if Puloka knew the three people who were slain.</p> <p>The shooting stemmed from an altercation that began inside the sports bar, which is located at 22855 Pacific Hwy S, and continued outside as hundreds of people were filing into the parking.</p> <p>Surveillance video released by Des Moines police showed a large group of men and women who were arguing, including instances when a man was seen violently pushing several women away. The video does not show the actual shooting but it was clear that the situation was very heated and emotional.</p> <p>One of the victims has been identified as Ezra Taylor, 26.</p> <p>KOMO News spoke to Taylor's mother who pleaded for justice in the death of her son. She said Taylor was an innocent bystander as the melee unfolded around him.</p> <p>Police said the other two victims -- a man and woman -- died after they were gunned down while traveling in the HOV lane of Pacific Highway. They have been identified as Angelia Hylton, 46, and Antoine Matthews, 32.</p> <p>Puloka has been accused of previous crimes, according to court documents.</p> <p>The King County Prosecutor's Office said in a written statement that Puloka was charged in 2014 with second-degree murder, second-degree assault and first-degree unlawful possession of a firearm.</p> <p>The prosecutor's office said a jury in 2018 cleared Puloka of the murder charge but jurors convicted him on third-degree assault and he pleaded guilty to first-degree possession of a firearm. Officials said the sentence for Puloka for the crimes was 16 months in prison along with 36 months to be served concurrently,</p> <p>The presiding judge over his case signed the sentence in Feb. 12, 2018</p> <p>According to police, Puloka had been considered armed and dangerous. Anyone with information about the current location of Simmons should call the Des Moines Police Department Tip Line at 206-870-6871.</p> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>The sister of one of the victims, Angelia Hylton, said justice will not be served until there is a conviction.</p> <p>“He turned himself in or he may got caught or however it is, that’s not justice yet,” said Vonsetta Burns, the sister of Hylton.</p> <p>The justice comes from when they say, you’re not longer going to be free. There should be no bail. There should be no bail and they should be keeping him in, for the rest of his life. If he gets off, I’m going to be hurt. We’re all going to be hurt. Young people are gone, for nothing.”</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>HEADLINE</b>               | <b>10/25 Auburn shooting: 1 killed, 1 in custody</b>  |
| <b>SOURCE</b>                 | <a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-killed-1-custody-after-auburn-shooting/JGPLVAJSZJAN7NKV2PAWFPGGM4/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-killed-1-custody-after-auburn-shooting/JGPLVAJSZJAN7NKV2PAWFPGGM4/</a>   |
| <b>GIST</b>                   | <p>AUBURN, Wash. — One man was killed and another is in custody after a shooting Monday night on the Muckleshoot Reservation, the King County Sheriff’s Office said.</p> <p>The shooting happened around 9 p.m. at 14627 SE 368th Place.</p> <p>The sheriff’s office said both the suspect and the victim are adult men and there are no suspects outstanding.</p> <p>No additional information was provided.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>HEADLINE</b> | <b>10/25 Idaho mall shooting: 2 dead, 4 injured</b>   |
| <b>SOURCE</b>   | <a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-Reports-of-injuries-after-shooting-in-16563113.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-Reports-of-injuries-after-shooting-in-16563113.php</a>   |
| <b>GIST</b>     | <p>BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A suspect is in custody after two people were killed and four injured — including a police officer — in a shooting at a shopping mall Monday in Boise, Idaho, police said.</p> <p>At a news conference, authorities said officers exchanged gunfire with the suspect.</p> <p>Police on Monday evening said in a news release that the suspect was in critical condition at a hospital and that the officer who was hurt had been treated and released. Police haven't released any other information about the victims, officer or the suspect.</p> <p>The mall had been secured by Monday evening, and police said it would remain closed as the investigation continues.</p> <p>Boise Police Chief Ryan Lee said the shooting was reported to law enforcement about 1:50 p.m. on Monday — including a report that one person was “shot and down” at that time.</p> <p>When the officers arrived, they spotted someone who matched the description of the suspect.</p> <p>“There was an exchange of gunfire that ensued shortly thereafter, resulting in the officer's injury, as well as the suspect being taken into custody,” Lee said. He said investigators believe there was only one shooter, and there is no ongoing danger to the public.</p> <p>“We really cannot at this time speak to any motivation behind it,” Lee said, calling any speculation premature.</p> <p>“I cannot stress enough how traumatic this event is for the community at large, as well as for those that were witnesses, or are the families of those involved or involved themselves,” Lee said.</p> |

After the shooting, several witnesses stood in the rain outside the entrance to Macy's — one of five large department stores at the mall — waiting to be interviewed by police or told they could leave. Patrol cars from several agencies, ambulances and fire trucks filled a section of the mall parking lot. Officers from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were assisting in the investigation.

About a quarter of a mile away, officers closed part of a road near a busy intersection so they could investigate a second crime scene related to the shooting incident. Officers at the second crime scene declined to answer questions about the investigation other than to confirm it was related to the shooting investigation.

Cheri Gypin, of Boise, was in the mall with a friend where they walk for an hour three or four times a week. She said she heard several large bangs, but thought something had fallen from the ceiling. Then about 60 people, including families pushing strollers, came running at them, some of them shouting that there was an active shooter.

"My friend was trying to process it," said Gypin, 60. "I just looked at her and said, 'We've got to run.' So we just ran and kept running until we got to the outer perimeter of the parking lot."

They made their way back to their car, where police told the crowd of people who had fled the mall to leave the parking area.

Investigators were working with hospital officials to notify family members of those injured and killed in the shooting, Lee said.

The shooting between the suspect and officer will be investigated separately by the Critical Incident Task Force led by the Meridian Police Department, police said Monday evening.

Boise Mayor Lauren McLean asked members of the public and the news media to give the victims and their families privacy as they deal with the trauma of the shooting. She thanked the law enforcement officers, first responders and others she said worked to keep the community safe.

"Countless people found themselves in a situation they never would have or should have expected," McLean said, lauding the shopkeepers and others in the mall for reacting "so quickly to take care of folks that were there. You showed in a tough and chaotic moment how much you care and what you're willing to do to support and care for strangers."

[Return to Top](#)

| HEADLINE | 10/25 Charlottesville 'Unite the Right' civil trial  |
|----------|--|
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlottesville-trial-unite-the-right-rally/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charlottesville-trial-unite-the-right-rally/</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>More than four years after white supremacists wreaked havoc in Charlottesville, Virginia, victims of the violence are suing the neo-Nazis and white nationalists who organized the protests, claiming in civil court that the organizers of the "Unite the Right" rally planned the violent attacks against counter-protesters, resulting in the death of one protester and the injury of more than a dozen others. The trial kicked off Monday in federal court with jury selection.</p> <p>Ten members of the Charlottesville community, some of whom were injured as a result of the violence, brought the lawsuit against a group of neo-Nazis, white supremacists and hate groups. Ten organizations are being sued and the other 14 defendants are people who orchestrated the weekend events that culminated in violence in August 2017 claim their actions are covered by freedom of speech and that the violence was unplanned and took place when rally goers acted in self-defense, while plaintiffs claim that it was carefully coordinated.</p> <p>"There is one thing about this case that should be made crystal-clear at the outset — the violence at Charlottesville was no accident," the complaint says. "The violence, suffering, and emotional distress that occurred in Charlottesville was a direct, intended, and foreseeable result of Defendants' unlawful conspiracy."</p> |

[The rally](#) drew hundreds of white nationalists who were there in part to protest the city's decision to remove a monument to Confederate General Robert E. Lee from a park.

One of the defendants, James Alex Fields Jr, has previously [pleaded guilty](#) to federal hate crimes charges and admitted that he intentionally plowed his speeding car into a crowd of anti-racism protesters, killing [Heather Heyer](#) and injuring dozens. He has [been sentenced](#) to life in prison.

In total, the death toll that weekend rose to three when a state police helicopter that had been monitoring the event and assisting with the governor's motorcade crashed, killing two troopers.

The protests led to a national uproar when President Trump blamed the violence at the rally on "[both sides](#)," a statement critics saw as a refusal to condemn racism. During his campaign, Mr. Biden said the events in Charlottesville became the [catalyst for his run for the presidency](#).

The plaintiffs are seeking an unspecified amount in monetary damages, and are hoping to deter future events like that from happening in Charlottesville, or anywhere in America, ever again.

Executive director Amy Spitalnick of Integrity First for America, the nonprofit that is supporting the lawsuit, told CBS News in a statement, "The violence in Charlottesville four years ago was no accident. And at a moment of rising extremism, this case makes clear that violent hate won't go unanswered — that accountability and justice matter."

According to [CBS Charlottesville affiliate WCAV](#), the plaintiffs have terabytes of evidence proving the events of the rally were orchestrated, and detailed messages exchanged on the online platform Discord, a gaming and messaging app that they say was used to organize the rally.

In addition to the digital evidence, which details hateful anti-Semitic and racist rhetoric, plaintiffs will argue that the defendants violated a Civil War-era law that was used to stop the Ku Klux Klan from terrorizing and infringing on the civil rights of African Americans.

In court on Monday, Judge Norman K. Moon instructed a group of impaneled jurors that they must not search for or interact with any news or information about the case, and warned, "you are just simply not allowed to talk about the case with anyone." He indicated that they do not anticipate having a full jury until possibly Wednesday morning, when opening arguments could take place. The trial is expected to last four weeks.

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Nigeria: gunmen kill 18 attending mosque</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-18-villagers-shot-dead-mosque-nigeria-80777924">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-18-villagers-shot-dead-mosque-nigeria-80777924</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>LAGOS, Nigeria -- At least 18 worshippers were killed by gunmen who attacked a mosque in northern Nigeria during early morning prayers Monday, local authorities and police told The Associated Press.</p> <p>The attack took place in Mazakuka village in Mashegu local government area of the country's Niger state. The attackers, believed to be ethnic Fulani nomadic herders, were able to escape.</p> <p>Similar ethnic violence, which has led to hundreds of deaths so far this year, stems from a decades-long conflict over access to water and land. Some of the Fulani caught up in that conflict have taken up arms against local Hausa farming communities.</p> <p>"The gunmen came around the mosque and started shooting them," Alhassan Isah, chairman of Mashegu local government area told The AP. He said another four people were injured.</p> <p>Niger police commissioner Monday Kuryas said the attack was related to the conflict between the villagers and the Fulani herders.</p> |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>The latest attack is another example of the troubled security situation in most states in Nigeria's northwest and central regions. The northwest in particular has been witnessing a spike in deadly violence.</p> <p>Most of the affected communities are in hard-to-reach areas such as the latest in Mazakuka, which is about 270 kilometers (167 miles) away from the state capital. The gunmen often outnumber security operatives in those communities and the inadequate police presence coupled with poorly armed security personnel often result in attacks that last long hours before help could come.</p> <p>A week ago in northwest Sokoto state, assailants attacked a rural area and operated for more than 12 hours, killing at least 40 people and displacing many more.</p> <p>In addition to large swathes of land with little or no government presence which have turned into hideouts for the assailants, security analysts say the government has shown a lack of will to address the problem.</p> <p>Regarding the latest violence in Niger, state police commissioner Kuryas admitted that the "very difficult" terrain in Mashegu made it difficult for the police to swiftly respond to the security alert. "It is not accessible by road," he said.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 'El Chapo' appeals conviction; seeks trial</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/el-chapo-appeals-conviction-argues-trial/story?id=80776864">https://abcnews.go.com/US/el-chapo-appeals-conviction-argues-trial/story?id=80776864</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Lawyers for the drug kingpin known as El Chapo argued Monday for a new trial, insisting "breathtaking jury misconduct" and an "unparalleled set of stifling defense restrictions" marred <a href="#">his conviction</a>.</p> <p>Joaquin Guzman, 64, was sentenced to life in prison after he was found guilty in February 2019 of running an industrial-sized drug trafficking operation, the Sinaloa cartel, one of the world's largest, most profitable and most ruthless drug smuggling organizations.</p> <p>Guzman's attorney, Marc Fernich, argued <a href="#">El Chapo</a> did not get a fair trial because his solitary confinement in what the lawyer called a "modern dungeon" impaired his "cognitive, emotional and mental" faculties.</p> <p>"The combination of unprecedented restrictions made it impossible to meaningfully prepare a defense," Fernich said in court Monday.</p> <p>Under questioning from a three-judge panel of the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals, Fernich conceded the defense made no specific objections during trial. Prosecutors said the strict conditions of El Chapo's confinement were deemed necessary.</p> <p>"This judge was presented with a defendant who had already escaped from prison twice in Mexico in dramatic fashion, who had a history of intimidating and killing perceived rivals and who had previously run his criminal enterprise while incarcerated," the Justice Department's Brett Reynolds said in court Monday.</p> <p>Guzman's appeal also argued the trial judge should have more forcefully questioned whether jurors disobeyed repeated instructions to avoid information about the case that was not included as evidence.</p> <p>An anonymous juror told Vice News that five jurors consumed news coverage or followed the trial on social media. Fernich called them "5 jurors who don't know the meaning of an oath" and urged the appellate court to pursue an inquiry.</p> <p>"It's very disquieting in a case like this to do an end-around and let it go," Fernich said. "This guy is going to be in a box for the rest of his natural life. I'm not asking you to play violins for him and I'm not playing any violins for him either. This is very, very serious business for everybody concerned."</p> <p>Prosecutors argued the Vice article was insufficient to merit an inquiry.</p> |



|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>"The evidence here is not competent. It's just not. It's anonymously sourced. It's non-corroborated. It is hearsay and double hearsay," the Justice Department's Hiral Mehta said in court Monday.</p> <p>There was no immediate ruling.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 Seattle police bust Lego trafficking scheme</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/25/lego-seattle-police-trafficking-scheme">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/25/lego-seattle-police-trafficking-scheme</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Police in <a href="#">Seattle</a> went undercover to break open what they said was a trafficking ring involving the sale of expensive stolen goods: Lego, taken from an Amazon store.</p> <p>Saying they had seized 171 sets, police released a <a href="#">picture</a> showing the boxes stacked together.</p> <p>The accused store owner denied knowingly selling stolen goods, protested against the picture and said he would fight the resultant charges.</p> <p>According to one expert, <a href="#">Lego</a> theft and trafficking has become a major concern.</p> <p>RJ Coughlin, a director at <a href="#">Brickcon</a>, a convention for adult Lego enthusiasts, <a href="#">told Fox 13 Seattle</a> Lego theft was “very, very prominent here in the north-west”, in part because sets can fetch \$800.</p> <p>“You could go to Fred Meyer and Walmart in many parts of the city, in the outlying areas, and you’ll actually see Lego sets are locked up,” Coughlin said.</p> <p>“You will see shelves that are pretty much empty, and if you talk to the employees they will tell you someone literally came that morning, loaded up the cart full of Lego and just walked right out [of] there.”</p> <p>This summer, the Amazon 4-Star, a store in downtown Seattle run by the online retail giant, said it was the target of a repeat shoplifter who stole electronics and Lego sets worth more than \$10,000.</p> <p>At the same time, Rummage Around, an operator at Pike Place, was selling popular sets based on Star Wars’ The Mandalorian and other franchises. To an employee of the Amazon store, the sets looked suspiciously familiar. A supervisor visited, saw identification stickers on sets and contacted law enforcement.</p> <p>Seattle police commenced what they called “Operation: MandalOrganized Retail Theft”, going undercover to <a href="#">investigate</a> the Pike Place seller.</p> <p>Plainclothes officers visited the store to offer marked merchandise – specifically, a Baby Yoda Lego set – to its 67-year-old owner, Mark Brady. According to police reports, after an undercover detective told Brady he stole the set from Amazon 4-Star, Brady said he did not like that the set was marked but could cut the marker off.</p> <p>The detective, police said, asked Brady: “What else do you need?”</p> <p>Brady allegedly replied that he would take “Lego sets – the big ones”.</p> <p>After weeks of investigation, police determined Brady was knowingly selling stolen goods. Saying Brady directed a “prolific” shoplifter to steal from retail stores, they also said that on one occasion the shoplifter sold multiple items to Brady while detectives were in his store. Police said they were still investigating the shoplifting suspect, who they had identified.</p> <p>Brady was charged with trafficking stolen property, an offense which could lead to prison time.</p> <p>Speaking to the <a href="#">Washington Post</a>, Brady denied knowingly selling stolen goods and said fellow Pike Place business owners had created a GoFundMe account to help him retain a lawyer.</p> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>“I do want to fight this,” he said.</p> <p>Brady told the Post he was unhappy with the photo of the allegedly stolen sets, which he said made him appear to be a “monster”. He also questioned how police could prove which sets were stolen, and said his life had recently been made “miserable”, through several surgeries and slowing business due to the pandemic.</p> <p>Police said the investigation was continuing.</p> |
|  | <a href="#">Return to Top</a>   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/24 Police chief ‘shoot to incapacitate’ policy</b>   |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/a-shoot-to-incapacitate-policy-puts-georgia-police-chief-and-town-in-the-spotlight/2021/10/24/d64b86f4-3378-11ec-9241-aad8e48f01ff_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/a-shoot-to-incapacitate-policy-puts-georgia-police-chief-and-town-in-the-spotlight/2021/10/24/d64b86f4-3378-11ec-9241-aad8e48f01ff_story.html</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>LAGRANGE, Ga. — A fundamental tenet of police training in the United States is that officers who fire their weapons in response to a deadly threat should always aim for "center mass," generally the chest. That's the biggest target and so the easiest to hit. But a bullet that finds its mark there is likely to kill.</p> <p>The police chief in this picturesque Deep South town says there's a better approach. Louis Dekmar, who has run the LaGrange Police Department for 26 years, is training his officers to shoot for the legs, pelvis or abdomen in situations where they think it could stop a deadly threat without killing the source of that threat. Doing so, he believes, could make a difference in the more than 200 fatal police shootings nationwide every year that involve individuals armed with something other than a gun.</p> <p>“Every time we avoid taking a life,” Dekmar says, “we maintain trust.”</p> <p>The chief’s “Shoot to Incapacitate” program has drawn interest from academics who say it merits further study. In the national law enforcement community, however, it has elicited harsh, widespread criticism.</p> <p>Other police leaders in Georgia found the idea so controversial that they made it a focus of their annual conference in August, flying in nine experts to discuss the pros and cons. One group’s executive director will soon release a position paper advising departments throughout the state not to follow Dekmar’s lead.</p> <p>While such a policy might be supported by the public, explained John B. Edwards of the Peace Officers Association of Georgia, most agencies would find it impossible to implement. “It’s opened Pandora’s box,” he said.</p> <p>This isn’t the first time Dekmar has championed the unorthodox in LaGrange.</p> <p>In the late 1990s, he instituted mandatory audio recordings of officer-citizen interactions. In 2004, he began sending his entire force to crisis intervention training so that everyone would know how to de-escalate encounters with people affected by mental illness. In 2009, he purchased body cameras for his officers, and in 2017 he made <a href="#">national headlines for apologizing</a> for his agency’s role in a 1940 lynching — by all accounts, the first time a Southern police chief had done so.</p> <p>Town leaders have consistently invested in the department during his tenure.</p> <p>“We’re very proud of the work Chief Dekmar has done here,” LaGrange Mayor Jim Thornton said early this month. “He’s a professional with high standards, and we fully support his effort to explore new options.”</p> <p>****</p> <p>The basics of deadly force training in U.S. law enforcement have not changed for decades, though the practice once termed “shoot to kill” now is called “shoot to stop the threat.” The prime goal is to keep officers safe.</p> |

It was in Israel during a 2004 police exchange that Dekmar first saw how agencies elsewhere practiced shooting beyond center mass to incapacitate suspects — aiming for areas of the body like the legs and hips. He was intrigued but thought the idea would never work in cities back home, partly because so many Americans have guns.

Over the next decade, though, he traveled to other countries and learned about similar policies that allowed police to shoot at nonvital areas in certain circumstances. By 2019, amid continued upheaval over police killings in the United States, Dekmar decided to look more closely at the approach for LaGrange. His training sergeant was dubious.

“I thought, ‘This is stupid,’ ” Joshua Clower, 40, recounted recently, standing beneath a canopy of pines on the agency’s gun range. He had hoped the chief would drop the idea, but when that didn’t happen, Clower grudgingly began research, mostly seeking to debunk it. He called a respected doctor in town who thought the strategy had promise. He reviewed police shooting videos that showed chest shots did not always immediately stop a threat. Some people were able to keep advancing, while those hit in the leg or pelvis usually couldn’t.

Though specialized units such as SWAT teams already used this tactic, Clower could find no department that applied it to line officers. Over 12 months of research, he and Dekmar looked at [data on the approximately 1,000 people fatally shot](#) each year, a disproportionate number of them Black. In roughly a quarter of cases, they had held knives, screwdrivers or other items that might have given officers more time to maneuver. Those were the instances Dekmar wanted to address.

The two men assembled a 503-page document titled “LaGrange Police Department Incapacitation Shots,” and a training team created a program that included classroom instruction, videos of police shootings, various scenarios and firearms testing at a gun range. To pass, officers had to accurately place 80 percent of 20 shots to various body parts on color-coded silhouettes.

The department began training its 94 officers in February. Clower, now a convert, stressed the intent was to provide each with a backup option for threatening situations — one less likely to cause death. This wasn’t about Annie Oakley-style sharpshooting, he said, just a shift of aim if an officer had to take a shot. It would never be required policy, he added.

The skepticism was near-universal initially. Attitudes have since changed.

“We need to try new things,” said Bryant Mosley, 31, one of LaGrange’s few Black officers, who has degrees in psychology and counseling. He decided to go into law enforcement after [George Floyd died last year](#) under the knee of a Minneapolis officer — specifically to help transform law enforcement — and he joined Dekmar’s department because of the chief’s reputation as an innovator.

“This is change,” Mosley said. “And change makes people uncomfortable.”

In late September, the town had its first police-involved shooting since the training began. Officer David Horseman, 29, confronted a man wielding a machete downtown, first firing his taser and then, when that proved ineffective, raising his gun in his other hand and firing.

According to the department, the man was hit in the abdomen and legs. Horseman remembers targeting his pelvic area and planning to “walk” the bullets up toward his chest as needed.

“He fell to the ground before I got to center mass,” Horseman said, “and that’s essentially what saved his life.”

The officer went home that night grateful for the outcome. “I don’t want to be the reason anyone dies,” he said. “I want to be able to say I did everything I could to prevent that.”

\*\*\*\*

LaGrange, population 31,000, is anchored by a pretty town square and columned antebellum houses. It's about 70 miles southwest of Atlanta in the middle of the Bible and football belts, and people want to know what church you attend and what team you root for. The [local newspaper](#) prints a daily Bible verse below the weather forecast.

Dekmar grew up in Oregon, spent the first 10 years of his police career in Wyoming and was hired as La Grange's top cop in 1995. He doesn't like the term "law enforcement" and instead tells people he works in "police services." Less than 10 percent of what officers do results in arrest, Dekmar notes, and he says police should emphasize their role as helpers. What elsewhere would be called a SWAT team is an "Emergency Services Unit" here.

The chief has a no-profanity rule, a relative rarity among police departments. Cursing in front of a member of the public will get officers a mandatory day's suspension and lost pay. And he doesn't like officers wearing sunglasses while interacting with the community.

"It's intimidating," said Dekmar, who at 66 is trim and polite. Despite three decades in Georgia, he still has little trace of a Southern accent.

He tells his officers he has their backs, as long as their intentions are good and they follow his policies. "I can't talk pretty enough to cover for bad officers," he said.

In a community that today is 51 percent Black and 42 percent White, Dekmar has participated in some of its town-funded efforts to address race. During a trust-building program, he became friends with teacher Ernest Ward, a former president of the local branch of the NAACP, and Ward often served as a go-between for Black residents and the chief. When complaints of police mistreatment arose, Ward said the chief was always quick to invite him over to view body-camera footage of the interaction.

"If you call him and say there's a concern, he stops immediately and looks into it," Ward said. "He's earned the trust of this community."

Dekmar's initiative has not been controversial in LaGrange, yet the response from national law enforcement circles remains mostly negative and sometimes brutal.

"This bird brain chief is going to get someone killed," one person wrote on the department's Facebook page.

A neighboring police department posted a link there to its own recruiting video and told officers it was hiring: "Come to an agency where you are appreciated, valued, respected, and are able to do your job."

Two months ago, Dekmar was in the hotel banquet room when those assembled experts critiqued his program for more than two hours before an audience of 150 officers. Several on the panel dwelled on the reality that cops are usually bad shots in stressful situations. [Various studies](#) place their hit rates between 20 to 50 percent.

Eric Daigle, a former officer and attorney who is now a law enforcement consultant in Connecticut, said that "shoot to incapacitate" adds even more complexity to situations in which officers must react quickly to protect their own lives. In that moment, he said, the policy forces them to decide whether their most deadly weapon should be used in a less deadly way.

"One thing we know for sure is that's too much for a human being to process in a split second," Daigle said. Best to keep it consistent and simple.

Seth Stoughton, a former Tallahassee officer who teaches law at the University of South Carolina, had a different take. Though he has gone through the LaGrange training, he remains hesitant about it and especially uncertain that it would work for other agencies.

Policing in the United States remains highly localized, he noted: "Policing in a democracy means that a community gets to define what 'good' policing looks like, and that definition may vary a bit from place to place."

Still, he isn't dismissing what Dekmar is doing. After controversial police shootings that end in death, people often ask why an officer couldn't have shot the person in a leg or arm. Departments are quick to recite a litany of reasons. Stoughton wonders if it's time to reexamine those.

Preservation of human life should be the highest priority in policing, Stoughton stressed in an interview after the conference, and that alone should cause leaders to examine LaGrange's policy with an open mind.

"Sometimes policing is its own worst enemy," he said. "Chief Dekmar is very comfortable with his base of support locally, and that gives him the freedom to challenge the policing status quo. He's willing to be disruptive."

[Return to Top](#)

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| HEADLINE | <b>10/25 FBI: hate crimes against Asians rose 76%</b>  |
| SOURCE   | <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/hate-crimes-asians-rose-76-2020-amid-pandemic/story?id=80746198">https://abcnews.go.com/US/hate-crimes-asians-rose-76-2020-amid-pandemic/story?id=80746198</a>  |
| GIST     | <p>Hate crimes against people of Asian descent rose by 76% in 2020, according to newly republished data by the FBI.</p> <p>The FBI previously <a href="#">issued hate crime data</a> in August, but due to an error in reporting Ohio's statistics, the data was incomplete. The FBI has now corrected the technical problem in Ohio's reporting system.</p> <p>In 2020, 279 hate crime incidents against <a href="#">individuals of Asian descent</a> were reported, compared to 158 incidents reported in 2019.</p> <p>More than 60% of hate crimes in the United States were carried out on the basis of an individual's race, according to FBI data released Monday.</p> <p>"Every hate crime is an attack on the community," Jay Greenberg, deputy assistant director of the FBI's criminal division, told ABC News' Chief Justice Correspondent Pierre Thomas.</p> <p>Greenberg said most hate crimes are directed at African Americans, but acknowledged there was an uptick in anti-Asian hate crimes due to <a href="#">COVID-19</a>.</p> <p>In total, there were 8,052 single-bias incidents -- crimes motivated by one type of bias -- involving 11,126 victims. Comparatively, there were 7,103 single-bias incidents involving 8,552 victims in 2019.</p> <p>The FBI said 20% of the hate crimes targeted a person's sexual orientation and 13% of the hate crimes that occurred in 2020 were due to religious bias.</p> <p>More than half of the offenders were white, and 21% of the offenders were African American.</p> <p>Greenberg said they are working to make sure there is trust not only in the FBI, but in local communities as well.</p> <p>"Because a hate crime is defined as a violent or property crime with a bias motivation, that crime could be categorized a number of different ways," he explained. "We would like the public to reach out to us if they believe that they are a victim of a hate crime. It's not for the public to make that determination; we will work with our state and local partners and help determine how best to investigate that."</p> <p>When someone is a victim of a hate crime, people have different reactions, according to Regina Thompson, the head of the FBI's victim services unit.</p> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <p>"Everybody has their own way of reacting and on their own timeline, so sometimes people will react immediately in the aftermath of a crime," said Thompson, who was named head of the unit last year. "Sometimes they'll go immediately into crisis and crisis intervention will be needed. Sometimes the full impact isn't felt for hours, days, weeks, sometimes even months after the criminal event and the way that they react, there's absolutely no normal."</p> <p>Greenberg said that while they don't discuss the number of cases they are currently investigating, leaders at the FBI "have brought a renewed focus to enforcing the civil rights program consistently across all our offices, and we have seen the number of cases rise in the last year."</p> <p>The bureau takes a victim-centered approach to hate crimes, the two senior FBI officials explained.</p> <p>"The FBI does have a victim services division that is focused on assisting and supporting the victims of federal crime and that when they are a victim of a federal crime, we are there to assist them and they can expect us to do that with understanding, dignity, fairness and respect," Thompson said.</p> <p>Thompson said that hate crimes are especially unique because it is a direct assault on someone's identity and individuality.</p> <p>"It really strikes at the fundamental core of who the person is, which makes it very different from some of the other violent crimes," she explained. "It is an attack on something that is within the person's identity, something that's very immutable about them and often something that they can't even change. So that has a very deep psychological effect."</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |   |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| HEADLINE                      | <b>10/24 Portland police: 19 shootings over weekend</b>  |
| SOURCE                        | <a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-police-respond-to-19-shootings-over-the-weekend-including-double-homicide-report">https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-police-respond-to-19-shootings-over-the-weekend-including-double-homicide-report</a>  |
| GIST                          | <p>Police in <a href="#">Portland</a>, Oregon, responded to at least 19 shootings across the city during the weekend, including a double homicide that pushed the city past its <a href="#">three-decade</a> record number of killings, according to reports.</p> <p>The Oregonian reported that Sunday's killings <a href="#">would bring the city's homicide toll to 71 this year</a>, breaking a record of 70 set in 1987.</p> <p>Fox 12 Oregon <a href="#">reported</a> that the shootings resulted in several injuries and arrests.</p> <p>The city has had more than 1,000 shootings in 2021, at least 314 people have been injured by bullets. Firearms have accounted for three-quarters of homicides. Police attribute much of the gunfire to gangs, fights and retaliation killings, but they are also affecting bystanders.</p> <p>Portland's police department is struggling to keep up amid an acute staffing shortage and budget cuts.</p> <p>The Fox report said most of the shootings over the weekend did not have any victims. Police in the city responded to six shootings on Sunday morning alone. Police <a href="#">told</a> KOIN that a shooting on Sunday at 6:30 a.m. resulted in a double murder in an apartment complex.</p> <p>Police <a href="#">told</a> The Oregonian that the victims were a man and a woman; a 45-year-old man had been arrested on allegations of murder.</p> |
| <a href="#">Return to Top</a> |  |

**Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.**



If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to [intake@wsfc.wa.gov](mailto:intake@wsfc.wa.gov) and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

**DISCLAIMER** - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

**FAIR USE Notice** All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: [≤http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)